

THE SOCIALIST THOUGHT OF MAHATMA GANDHI

(In Two Volumes)

VOLUME - I

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FOREWORD

Mahatma Gandhi continues to be a personality who cannot easily be identified with any particular school of thought or of social philosophy. Long ago Gunther said, 'No more difficult or enigmatic character (in history) can easily be conceived.' Yet there have always been attempts to categorise him, classify him, put him in a docket and be satisfied that we have 'found him'. Though the present author Dr. Benudhar Pradhan in his Preface has said, 'I have arrived at the conclusion that Gandhi was a convinced socialist', he has hastened to add, with some pluses and minuses, that his is a viable model in the atomic age for 'the socialism of tomorrow', but not of today as understood and practised in some countries of Asia and Europe.

The author instead of naming his book, 'Mahatma Gandhi, the Socialist', he has taken care to identify in this book that part of Gandhi's thought and action which is broadly socialistic in content and named it, 'The Socialist Thought of Mahatma Gandhi'. There is enough in the total Gandhian thought which is much more, and different too, than what normally goes by the name of socialism. Gandhi, while yet a student in England, wrote that millions in India live on one pice per day and eke out an existence on stale bread and overtaxed salt. He could not but be a socialist in his thought !

Gandhi will continue to be a subject of study and interpretation for years to come. It would be so as long as the world would be searching for effective solutions to problems on account of the individual ownership of property. Much more complex are the problems created by man himself by his use and manipulation of science and technology for the satisfaction of his own ever-expanding needs and sense-hungers, and on account of his ambition to rule over others. There is no doubt that in the course of his intense search after the basic and fundamental Law of Life and Harmonious Human Living, Gandhi did find the Law, a way which he called, the Truth through Love or non-

violence. He tried to live it and apply it to solve problems of his generation. This 'experiment with Truth' as he called it, led him to Satyagraha and Sarvodaya. Thus he arrived at Satya, Ahimsa, Satyagraha and Sarvodaya. All these were indigenous Sanskrit words and they could not be adequately and meaningfully translated into any other language. Hence arose the necessity of trying to convey correctly to the world at large the meaning of what he said and did in the terminology of the English language, which is today more universal than any other. Gandhi himself had to write more in English even for his own countrymen, than in his own mother tongue Gujarati, or in Hindi which he projected as a link language for the whole of India.

Four simple Sanskrit words (they can be called Indian, since they are found in the languages in India with the same meaning), Satya, Ahimsa, Satyagraha and Sarvodaya, with such meanings, comments, explanations, amplifications, clarifications which Gandhi gave from time to time throughout his life, are the parameters of the whole alpha and omega of Gandhi's philosophy of life and his meaning of human existence. Left to himself, he had no necessity to use any other word or words to characterise his own philosophy or socio-economic ideas. It was only when people tried to understand him in the current common jargon, that they equated his philosophy or socio-economic ideas as socialistic, communistic, utopian or otherwise. At such times he would say, I am a socialist in action long before those who have begun to profess and publicise their socialism, meaning thereby, that he had been practising the basic principles of socialism by renouncing all his personal property and devoting himself for the reconstruction of society on the principles of equality, social justice, brotherhood and mutual cooperation. He is also said to have declared in the same spirit at some other time that he was a communist but without their violence. It would have been the easiest thing for him to declare that he was a socialist or even a communist if he really believed in the whole gospel as preached by the socialists and/or communists in his days. It would have been so natural for him to do so, especially when he lived in the Phoenix Settlement and started the Tolstoy Farm in South Africa. Nor would he have avoided the nomenclature out of sheer egoism or merely to show that he was different. He did not do so because

he was fully aware that he stood for something essentially different and was forging a path which could not be dubbed by any current known title. This does not at all mean that he owed nothing to the schools of socialistic thought to which so many of his contemporaries belonged. What has to be emphasised is that he differed substantially from the current socialistic thought and action and was striking a new path which had no doubt some important aspects which belonged to the current schools of socialism. The humanitarian, communitarian and egalitarian aspects of socialism, the subordination of individual interests to social interests were common to Gandhian and socialistic thought. But freedom and dignity of the individual were values which Gandhi prized more than the other schools. The individual was to him the pivot of society and suppression of the individual even by a democratic government was repugnant to Gandhi. It is needless to say that he abhorred the suppression and oppression which were ruling supreme in those days in some socialist countries. While he admired the achievements, he was sore that the means employed were not only violent but unscrupulous. He was not sure of either the perfection or the permanence of the results.

There is no doubt that it is necessary to understand as well as project Gandhi in terms of the jargon known to the world. Otherwise, there would be lack of communication. So, since Gandhi was not for status quo nor for capitalism, nor for utilitarianism, nor for exploitation, nor for inequality, nor for socio-economic injustice in any form or shape, it goes without saying that he was for a reconstruction of society on the basis of equality and socio-economic justice in which social interest was the dominant consideration. So far, there was common ground between socialism and Gandhi. It is also agreed that in the new society, there would be equality, fellowship, brotherhood, domination of egalitarianism and full scope for development of the individual, so that all could develop equally. But Gandhi would part company with all other schools of socio-economic change both as regards means to that end, and also the shape and form of the end. There are obvious reasons for this difference and they are rooted in the orientation of the ideologies of Gandhi and other schools of thought.

Modern socialistic thought had its origin economically in the

disparity current in society, emotionally in the sympathy or even empathy for the sufferings of the poverty-stricken, humanistically in the compassion evoked by the plight of the exploited. In the case of Gandhi, the orientation was in the belief in God or some supreme power which laid the Law, an insight that all life is one, and that the good of the individual is in the good of all. He sought his identity and self-realisation in the service of others. This realisation meant his conviction and experience of love as the true law of life and human living. The second important point of departure was the use of violence as means which he believed was but perpetuating the action and reaction of violence without end. The third was the use of moral and ethical means alone, whereas the schools of thought current at that time were not only indifferent about the means to be used but they could be said to be unscrupulous. The fourth point of difference was, in the case of the socialists, political power was to vest in the State, whether democratic or authoritarian, in the distant belief that the State would whither away. But Gandhi was always suspicious of the power of the State and he therefore preached the principle of trusteeship and decentralisation of political and economic power.

The author is fortunate that he is living and writing today and has before him the examples of the success or otherwise of the socialistic States both from the point of view of achieving the immediate and their present functioning. He is in a position to state and mark off what is socialistic in Gandhi's thought and what is not. It must be said to his credit that he has studied the subject in depth and documented his writing with quotes from sources of the post-Gandhian era as well. He has pointed out the sources of Gandhian ideas and how he developed them into a formidable ideology and one which could be further strengthened and used even in the atomic age. Man now knows where he is being led by the atomic arms race. Unless he becomes aware of the logical and natural consequences of the present power-competition betimes, the future of humanity is doomed. The author has rightly pointed out that Gandhian socialistic thought as fortified or reinforced by the safeguards of ethical and moral means and by the use of non-violent methods alone for solving all conflicts, is the seed of the 'future socialism' good enough even to operate in the atomic age.

In the course of the treatment of his theme, the author has made out that the concept of Sarvodaya is devoid of the necessity of class conflict and elimination of any class, as Gandhi believed that essentially the interest of the whole of humanity is one and indivisible. Gandhi did not believe only in what may be termed 'the economic man' in terms of materialism, but he believed in the total man, the spirit of man with a soul to gain or lose, and with all the other non-economic dimensions of love, morality, harmonious happiness of all and the sense of fulfilment in the service of others. The author has the advantage of having witnessed the workings of socialistic countries and the disillusionment of writers like Milovan Djilas and others who were once confirmed socialists or marxists and knew what socialism and its different brands meant. In sum, while Gandhian thought belongs to the class to which socialistic thought belongs in its humanistic and egalitarian approach to human society, it has added dimensions in the framework of the attainment of Truth and truthful living through Non-violence, Satyagraha and Sarvodaya. This significant addition can well lay claim as an alternative to all existing ideologies, especially in the developing situation brought about by man's indiscriminate and unbalanced use of science and technology and the emergence of an atmosphere in which global atomic warfare is not a myth or a fiction but a possibility in no distant future. I am glad that the author has been able to bring all these aspects in a single focus and facilitated a deeper study of Gandhi, his life, thought and action and the significance of it all to humanity.

R. R. DIWAKAR,
Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi,

BANGALORE.

P R E F A C E

In the years 1895, the then Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) is said to have remarked : "We are all socialists nowadays." Understood in the context of the socio-economic outlook prevailing in the British society during the last decade of the 19th century, such statement may sound as over-simplification or even as absurd: but such a statement has its validity for India, to a very large measure, in the seventies of the 20th century. The atmosphere in this country has become so much surcharged with talks on socialism that even the haves no less than the have-nots and the privileged no less than the under-privileged mouth socialist jargon and indulge in extravagant chanting of socialist hymns presumably with the expectation that such conduct on their part shall lend an air of respectability and dignity to their life, professions and practices and above all, to the exploitation that they indulge in and the privileges that they enjoy.

But there are many in this country and outside, who would hardly concede to Gandhi's claim to be recognised as a socialist. Mr. E. M. S. Namboodiripad has chided Gandhi of having profound bourgeois prejudice, "extremely reactionary social outlook", and "most reactionary and obscurantist ideologies". But Gandhi on his side inspite of his association with the Birlas and many multi-millionaires has claimed : "I was a socialist long before those I know in India had avowed their creed." Addressing a labour meeting in Bombay that was disturbed by some communists, Gandhi said in the thirties of this century : "I may tell you that I am trying my best to live up to the ideals of Communism in the best sense of the term."

Since the appearance of the Communist Manifesto in 1848 and the Paris Commune of 1871, many attempts have been made to ameliorate the lot of the suffering millions, to eradicate the element of exploitation from the society, and to engender the emergence of an egalitarian society based on the principles of

equality, fraternity and fellowship. But the hopes that blossomed at the initial stage of attempts like the Paris Commune or the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 withered too soon and in the Soviet Union and other communist countries where attempts were made to bring about "free development of each", the expectations have been frustrated. The attempt for the creation of a class-less society has culminated in the emergence of a "New Class" of Milovan Djilas—the "New Class" of Party and Political bureaucrats. The old form of exploitation has been replaced only by a new one; exploitation by the bourgeoisie has been replaced by exploitation by the Party chiefs and Party bureaucrats. The revolution consummated with unprecedented violence, bloodshed, hatred and terror, has succeeded in delivering an "Unperfect Society" of Milovan Djilas.

In the above context I have made an humble attempt to demonstrate, the extent to which Gandhi's claim to be termed as a socialist can be sustained, and show the relevance of his social philosophy, having egalitarian bearing, for the ushering in of a socialist society based on the sublime values of freedom, equality, fraternity and fellowship. I have arrived at the conclusion that Gandhi was a convinced socialist. His social philosophy not only gives the impression of a socialist doctrine; it is more egalitarian, humane, and scientific than the *Scientific Socialism* of the acclaimed prophets. Besides, Gandhian socialism with its emphasis on Sarvodaya or the integrated welfare of all and the non-violent technique of persuasion, conversion and Trusteeship, in this world studded with nuclear weapons endowed with its ominous potentialities, appears to be the only viable model for the socialism of tomorrow.

To work on Gandhi is a fairly difficult task. Although he believed in the virtue of self-restraint and practised it in ample measure in his own life, he was very much vocal in giving expression to the dictates of his conscience and his inner voice and he has spoken and written millions of words that would run into about 40,000 printed pages. With exceptions like Shakespeare, Napoleon, Marx, Darwin and Einstein very few in human history have arrested the attention of so many thinking men and women all over the world as Gandhi has done. Although a silken thread of consistency in respect of his ultimate objective runs through the length and breadth of his thoughts and

actions, his writings and pronouncements sometimes appear contradicting one another. As a result, contradictory epithets have been advanced to define his social philosophy and to measure his exact personality. Some have branded him as a revivalist, a reactionary, a bourgeois philosopher, a defender of the status quo, and an arch-enemy of progressivism and revolutions; yet others like Edgar Snow and Chester Bowles have branded him as "a great revolutionary" or as "a key to the revolution of our time" respectively. Hence John Gunther in his assessment of Gandhi's personality has said, "No more difficult or enigmatic character can easily be conceived" and Arthur Koestler has characterised him as "the greatest living anachronism of the twentieth century". I had to delve deep into the spoken and written words of Gandhi that have socialist bearings and the more I read and contemplated over different aspects of his socialist thought the more convinced I became day-by-day that Gandhi was a true socialist, and his socialist philosophy and strategy for socialist transformation not only represent the most scientific, rationalist, and humanistic approach to the problems of inequality of the modern world; it has its relevance as a potent revolutionary force for forging a socialist society of tomorrow. The present work, a revised version of my thesis for the D.Litt. examination of Utkal University is an humble endeavour to give expression to such deeply felt conviction.

I am conscious of my limitation. The work has become quite bulky. I could not help it. So much have been spoken and written by Gandhi and so much have been spoken and written on him that it is really a very difficult task to work on any aspect of Gandhian thought and feel satisfied that one has done justice to the subject. I still feel that I could not make use of much of the relevant materials that I have collected and which could have been used, but for my apprehension that the work would be too bulky. I have tried my best to delve deep into the original sources and give my own interpretation based on my deeply felt conviction.

I owe my highest debt of gratitude for this work to my Supervisor for the D.Litt. examination and my revered Professor, Dr. S. C. Dash, M.A. (Patna), LL.B. (Utkal), D.Phil. (Berlin), former Professor and Head of the Department of Political

Science, Utkal University who inspite of his varied preoccupations took enormous pains to go through this bulky work. But for his able guidance, timely assistance and encouragement, dispassionate, scientific and objective analysis, the work would not have been what it is at present.

I am grateful to Prof. Paul F. Power, Professor of Political Science, University of Cincinnati, Ohio, U.S.A. and Prof. Dr. A. D. Pant, M.A. D.Litt. (Allahabad), Professor and Head of the Department of Political Science, University of Allahabad, who in their capacity as examiners of my thesis "The Socialist Thought of Mahatma Gandhi" tendered valuable suggestions for the improvement of the work.

I am also deeply indebted to the authorities and staff of the Gandhian Institute of Studies, Varanasi, who provided me adequate opportunities, accommodated me in their Guest House and laid before me all the materials on Gandhi and Gandhian thought at their disposal and through discussions helped me to understand Gandhism and Gandhian thought in its true perspective.

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I am also indebted to the U.S.I.S., the Director of the Gandhi Museum, Patna, Secretary Gandhi Peace Foundation, and the Secretary local branch of Gandhi Peace Foundation Bhubaneswar, for helping me in the understanding of Gandhian thought in its true perspective.

I am equally indebted to many of my friends and well-wishers but for whose good-will, blessings, best wishes, co-operation, timely assistance, and advice, my work could not have been completed. Special mention may be made of Dr. I. N. Tewari, Professor of Political Science, Gandhian Institute of Studies, Varanasi, Sri Manmohan Choudhury, of the Sarva Seva Sangha, Dr. M. N. Das, M.A. (Allahabad), Ph.D. (London), D.Litt. (Utkal), Professor and Head of the Department of History, Utkal University, Dr. S. K. Das, M.Com. (Calcutta), D.B.A. (Washington), Professor and Head of the Department of Commerce, Utkal University, and a host of other friends and colleagues but for whose assistance and encouragement, I could

not have reached my goal.

Last and not the least, I am beholden to my wife Shrimati Prativa Pradhan and other members of my family who bore with fortitude all the physical and financial handicaps I had heaped upon them for a period of about seven years in order to be able to complete this self-inflicted assignment of mine in time.

Sri Mandir
(Sri Jagannath Temple)
Puri

BENUDHAR PRADHAN

Gandhi's Picture of Socialist India

I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to *him*. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?

Then you will find your doubts and your self melting away.

न.म.व.सिंह
स.म. व.सिंह

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**THE SOCIALIST THOUGHT OF
MAHATMA GANDHI**

(VOLUME—I)

CHAPTER 1

SOCIALISM OF A REVIVALIST

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, known the world over as Mahatma Gandhi, whose life was a saga of “Experiments with Truth”, inspite of, his transparent honesty of purpose, a mind that is distinctly unambiguous, ideas as clear as crystal, unequivocal commitment to values of enduring significance, and lack of dichotomy between his profession and practice, has baffled the entire world. He is compared with Francis of Assisi for his love for fellow creatures, St. Paul and St. Augustine, Socrates with his catechism, Mazzini, Garibaldi marching with his handful of followers, Rousseau, Buddha and the first of Jains.¹ He is also portrayed as a “revivalist” and chided for having subscribed to the “most reactionary and obscurantist of ideologies” and “extremely reactionary social outlook”.² Still others have acclaimed him as an “ardent advocate of revolt”.³ Gandhi himself claimed that he was a socialist and even a communist, championing the cause of the working men, “long before any of the young communist...were born”.⁴ He went on “I may tell you that I am trying my best to live upto the ideal of communism in the best sense of the term.”⁵ What exactly was then Gandhi? A “revivalist” as his critics called him or a socialist as he claimed himself to be?

“Modern socialism” it has been said “is a reaction to industrialism”.⁶ Whether it is the socialism of Saint Simon, Robert Owen and Charles Fourier that Engels contemptuously described as “utopian socialism” or the “scientific socialism” of Marx and Engels, the philosophy of socialism emerged as a reaction to the distortions brought about by the Industrial Revolution. The Utopian Socialists whose sense of compassion

and concern for social justice were aroused by the economic and social consequences of the Industrial Revolution considered class antagonism as the necessary basis for socialism, which Marx and Engels so passionately advocated. About the system visualised by the Utopian Socialists, the Communist Manifesto says : "The founders of these systems, see indeed, the class antagonism, as well as the action of the decomposing elements in the prevailing form of society."⁷

The Scientific Socialism of Marx and Engels, also conceived of socialism as a natural concomitant of the abuses associated with a technologically developed industrial society that has attained full maturity. The co-authors of Scientific Socialism believed that clash of interests, class-antagonism and class-war that are the inevitable outcome of the inherent contradictions of a bourgeois society must be taken advantage of, and even fomented, for the emergence of socialism. They contended that class hostility released by the bourgeois economic system and bourgeois relations of production, must necessarily assume the form of a violent revolution for the overthrow of the system of privileges and the establishment of an egalitarian society. Thus three basic postulates—a highly developed industrial society, class antagonism, and a violent civil war—constitute the core of Marxian Scientific Socialism. Besides, the main burden of Marxian Socialism as indeed of all concepts of socialism is its materialistic overtone. The amoralism of Marx due to his lack of concern for the nature and quality of the means to be adopted for the attainment of the new socialist Jerusalem, is the heritage willingly owned by most of the modern socialists.

Measured by these standards Gandhi would certainly be regarded as a revivalist. He was a life-long enemy of excessive doses of industrialism and technological development and the champion-in-chief of khadi and village industries, and simple non-class antagonistic life in self-sufficient village communities. In spite of his loin cloth, bare body, minimum of worldly comforts and earthly possessions, an awareness of the exploitation of the millions in any capitalist economy and society, and compassion for the suffering humanity, he was not prepared to talk in terms of class antagonism and class-war; rather he advocated class collaboration, class harmony, and reformation of the capitalists, so that they shed their acquisitiveness and

greed and worked for the objective of an egalitarian society. Instead of advocating the liquidation of the bourgeoisie, he pleaded for their assimilation in the society and their transformation into trustees of society's assets. Instead of championing a violent civil war and forcible overthrow of the privileged class, he advocated application of the technique of love and non-violence, persuasion and conversion, moral pressure, and ethical and spiritual emancipation of the privileged sections of the society. Above all, he was in intimate contact with many industrialists, businessmen and capitalists whose wealth and possession, according to him, were accumulated "by exploiting the masses".⁸ His handbooks were neither the Communist Manifesto nor the Capital, but either the Bhagavad Gita or the Bible. All these give one an impression that Gandhi was a revivalist. As Acharya J. B. Kripalani observed : "Inasmuch as Gandhiji was not a Marxist.....some place must be found for him in Marxian and scientific classification." So he was a 'revivalist'. The Charkha and the handloom—were they not revivalist? Did not cottage industry hark back to old scarcity economy? Further Gandhiji talked of village panchayats and not of revolutionary local soviets. He concentrated attention on the village and not on the city proletariat. He believed not in increasing wants but in self-denial and sanyama. He spoke in terms of the poverty of the masses in India and not their exploitation. He believed in the trusteeship of the rich. No doubt he was a good man, but a social 'revivalist'.⁹

Besides, Gandhi was born, brought up and nurtured under the sheltering care of a feudal order. He was born in the princely state of Kathiawad where his ancestors were Prime Ministers and Deputy Prime Ministers. His grandfather Uttamchand Gandhi was the Prime Minister of Porbandar and Junagadh and his father Karamchand Gandhi was the Prime Minister of Porbandar, Rajkot and Vankaner.¹⁰ Many of his ancestors were also Naib-Dewans or Deputy Prime Ministers.¹¹ Gandhi's grandfather Uttamchand received Rs. 700.00 per month, what was a fabulous salary in those days; besides he also got free food for his family. The intrinsic value of this salary and perks in modern terms will not be less than the emolument of the President of the Indian Republic. The wedding celebrations of Uttamchand's two sons were conducted

*in a royal style that were "unprecedented in the history of the town, lasted for one week, the Rana himself taking a leading part in them".*¹² Karamchand Gandhi, Gandhi's father who served as the Dewan or Prime Minister both in Porbandar and Rajkot had houses of his own in both these places and a third in Kutiana and "judging from the houses they lived in, they appeared to be in affluent circumstances".¹³ Gandhi's brother, Luxmidas married his daughters "with a pomp worthy of petty Indian royalty".¹⁴ He owned two houses in Rajkot. "Without being rich Mohan's people had an air of comfort and distinction." Thus Gandhi's family by "Indian standard was well-to-do".¹⁵

Gandhi not only inherited such prosperous and feudalistic family tradition; he also went to London to qualify for the bar with the avowed intention of becoming the Prime Minister of a Princely State.¹⁶ Thus superficially speaking environmental factors at home were not encouraging for the emergence of Gandhi as a socialist; rather it is very much natural to expect him to blossom into a zealous defender of feudalism, privileges and the status quo.

Gandhi was born in 1869, twenty-one years after the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* and just after the publication of the *Capital*. The Socialist Movement was then sweeping across France and Germany. The Paris Commune was established just two years after his birth; yet socialism could hardly be conceived of in a country where colonialism and feudalism had remained deeply entrenched. The Indian National Congress was to be born sixteen years later. There was hardly a ripple on the surface following the suppression of the uprising of 1857 and the transfer of power to the Crown. As such even the environmental factors in the country were not congenial for Gandhi to emerge as a socialist or a communist. Yet Gandhi's social philosophy is indistinguishable from socialism.

EARLY SCHOOLING IN SOCIALISM

Socialism is primarily concerned with enduring human values like equality, fraternity and fellow-feeling and an equitable sharing of the bounties of nature for the growth and

development of the community as a whole. It is a revolt against acquisitiveness, greed, selfishness and self-aggrandisement of the individual at the expense of the community. It represents an outright rejection of that crude and vulgar human and social relationship, that in the language of the *Communist Manifesto* "left no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest" and drowns everything "in the icy water of egotistical calculation".¹⁷ Acquisition of private property at the expense of the community, Bernard Shaw felt, is the very negation of Socialism.¹⁸ Positively speaking, Gandhi also felt that for the emergence of an egalitarian society, "I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor."¹⁹ Thus non-acquisitiveness, or renunciation of privileges, if one already possesses them, are the very essence of a socialist system. Gandhi inherited such aspects of his socialist character which, under the influence of the Bhagavad Gita were welded by him into Aparigraha, as a part of the family legacy.

Mohandas was specially fortunate in having as his ancestors persons, who were deeply imbued with an enlightened social and communal outlook. That must have left an indelible influence on Young Mohandas in transforming him into Gandhi, the socialist or communist of the later days. His grandfather Uttamchand Gandhi who was the Prime Minister of Porbandar was known for his non-acquisitive and non-possessive nature, and "gave away half of his income to various charities". "Large-heartedness was an outstanding trait of his character."²⁰ On the occasion of one of his son's marriage he received many costly wedding presents but non-acquisitive as he was, he turned over all of them to the Rana (the ruler of Porbandar) saying "All these belong to you since they have come from your subjects."²¹ Karamchand Gandhi, Gandhi's father had no attachment to property nor was he acquisitive. As Romain Rolland observed: "The Mahatma's father cared little for wealth and material values and left scarcely any to his family having given almost everything away to charity."²² He never sacrificed either his principles or his sense of justice for the sake of material prosperity. Apart from serving the states of Porbandar and Rajkot as Prime Minister, he also served the ruler of Vankaner for some time at the latter's request. When differences developed between

*the ruler and the Prime Minister and there was a breach of agreement on the part of the ruler, Karamchand Gandhi tendered his resignation. He was offered a sum of Rs. 10,000 by the ruler with a request to delete from his letter of resignation a reference to the breach of contract; but he declined the offer. Navalram, a common friend who was instrumental in bringing Karamchand Gandhi to Vankaner as Prime Minister, intervened at the time of the latter's departure, and put some bags of money under the seat of the carriage that was to carry him away from Vankaner. When Karamchand discovered the money, "without a word Kaba Gandhi himself removed all the bags from the carriage and placed them on the brick platform before the house to be returned to the ruler. Then only did he start on his journey back to Rajkot."*²³

Karamchand Gandhi never wanted to be rich. When land was being allotted for residential purposes in Rajkot the Thakore (the ruler) gave him the first choice to select any plot he liked for his personal use. With much persuasion by the Thakore and his relatives he accepted just a strip of 400 square yards of land. Even when urged by the Thakore to choose a bigger plot in view of his large family, he refused to be tempted even though it was offered free. As Pyarelal has observed: "No wonder that he did not leave behind much property."²⁴ P. C. Ghosh has similarly observed, "Kaba Gandhi did not, however, have any propensity for saving money and that is why he could leave but little property for his children."²⁵ In fact the last few years of his life he lived on a modest pension of Rs. 50.00 per month that he received from the Thakore. Thus Gandhi learnt his first lesson in non-acquisitiveness, from his father and grandfather.

Besides, Gandhi had his initial experience in community living, community consciousness, and self-surrender, in his family. He had the good fortune to have been born in a joint-family where five generations of Gandhis grew up and prospered in a single house. Karamchand Gandhi as the head of the family, had to see that the essential requirements of everybody in the family were properly met. He got the young ones married and settled them in life.

The keystone of this domestic edifice was Putalibai, Gandhi's

mother. She used to feed everybody first, the elders, the children, and her in-laws; only when all were satisfied, she ate whatever was left. She never distinguished between her own children and other children in the family. Besides, a number of guests, seldom less than twenty, usually sat down to eat with Karamchand Gandhi. They included secretaries and officials, who together with the members of his own family constituted his wider family. "This became a hereditary trait with his son—the Mahatma."²⁶ As it has been said: "Mohandas, the last child, son of Karamchand's old age, grew up in a warm and friendly home that was almost like an ashram."²⁷

Such joint family and such a wider family consisting of members other than one's kith and kin, provided Gandhi with an ideal training ground for community living, one of the basic aspects of socialism. Hence as Pyarelal has very aptly observed "The passion for ceaseless experimentation, in community living, as a part of his experiment with truth, the urge to live not only for mankind but in mankind and the time and care that he devoted in latter years to the trivia of Ashram life had their seed in the tradition of the joint family that surrounded his early childhood."²⁸

Besides, Gandhi grew up in a deeply religious atmosphere, greatly influenced by Vaishnavism and Jainism. Of course, religion as such did not appeal to him very much. "Being born in the Vaishnava faith, I had often to go to the Haveli. But it never appealed to me."²⁹ Yet as a child, Gandhi has to accompany his mother to the Vishnu, Shiva, and Rama temples. Jain monks used to pay frequent visits to his father. "These many things" says Gandhi "combined to inculcate in me a toleration for all faiths."³⁰ Although this religious grounding did not deepen his religiosity, it stimulated his spirit of tolerance for others and might have laid the foundation of the spirit of mutual accommodation and adjustment which lies at the very basis of his socialist thought.

Besides, the Vaishnava and the Jaina influence, must have inculcated in him a spirit of renunciation, aparigraha and non-possession that are the very cornerstones of Gandhian socialism. The Vaishnavite philosophy of complete surrender before God and the Jain injunction of non-violence must have

paved the way for the Gandhian concepts of complete identification of one's interests with the interests of the community or the fellow-beings and a non-violent socio-economic order respectively, that constitute the kernel of Gandhian socialist thought.

Although Gandhi's forefathers were administrators by profession, they belonged to the Vaishya caste—a caste, less privileged than the two upper classes in the Hindu caste structure, i.e. Brahmins and Kshatriyas,—a caste, consisting of persons who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow through adoption of professions like trade, commerce, agriculture and animal husbandry. H. S. Polak, Gandhi's associate in South Africa has observed: "From his earliest years Gandhi was familiar with Indian village folk and their simple way of life although his family had risen to high rank in State Service."³¹ Of course it is too much to say that Gandhi from his early days was associated with villagers since he spent his days mostly in the towns of Porbandar and Rajkot and had hardly any time to mix with the rural people; yet by his caste tradition he belonged to the masses and had nothing to do with the classes. This must have helped him in emerging as an advocate of Bread Labour, an essential aspect of his socialist thought.

Thus Gandhi's family background, the non-acquisitive instinct of his father and grandfather, association of his parents with Vaishnava and Jain faith, and his caste background must have gone a long way to groom the young Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi as the future Mahatma or the 'Great Soul' or a socialist Gandhi of the later days.

From his early childhood Gandhi had a sense of repulsion for caste superiority. Although by intellectual conviction he was a God-child of the *Bhagavad Gita* which he called his Mother, and believed in the *Varnashrama dharma* advocated therein, he was not a rabid caste-conscious Hindu. Even during his childhood, he rebelled against the practice of untouchability perpetrated by the Hindu caste system. A scavenger named Uka, an untouchable, used to clean their latrines. Mohandas was instructed by his mother not to touch him, and if by accident he brushed against him, the former was advised by his mother to take a bath to clean himself of the pollution. As an obedient son he often obeyed his mother; yet the young

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rebel of 12 used to rise in revolt against the practice of caste division and class superiority. "How can that be" Gandhi argued "when in the Ramayana one, regarded nowadays as untouchable, took Rama across the Ganges in his boat?" As Gandhi recollected later "I told my mother that she was entirely wrong in considering physical contact with Uka as sinful."³²

Thus the young social revolutionary was not prepared to accept any caste division and superiority of one caste over others. May be it is partially due to the fact that he belonged to the third category in order of superiority in the Hindu caste system. It was perhaps mainly because of his egalitarian outlook that during his childhood he rebelled against such social practices and prejudices which subsequently assumed the form of a revolt against any type of privilege. This led Gandhi to propound his concept of Ramarajya, Sarvodaya or Swaraj with equal opportunities for all, irrespective of caste division or accident of birth.

Judged by the educational institutions he attended and his academic record, Gandhi from the very start of his academic life belonged to the masses and not to the privileged class. Although he was the son of a Prime Minister, he started his academic life in a humble way by enrolling in a "Dooqli Shala" or "dust school" instead of joining the public schools that were often the nursery of most of the socialists or communists of his time and even of today.³³ Of course, he was not regarded as a "dunce" in the school and never earned a bad certificate. In fact, he won some prizes and scholarships during his school days. But as per his own admission, "I have to thank good luck more than my merit" for such scholarships and "I used to be astonished whenever I won prizes and scholarships".³⁴ This school studies did not make a scholar of him. He was at best a "mediocre" student. When he went to the college there the study did not interest him much. Speaking about his experience in the college, he says: "I went, but found myself entirely at sea. Every thing was difficult. I could not follow, let alone taking interest in the Professors' lectures. It was no fault of theirs. The Professors in that college were regarded as first rate. But I was so raw. At the end of the first term I returned home."³⁵ Such academic mediocrity and lack of intellectual brilliance during his student days, made him more fit to belong

to the masses—to be their representative and a champion of their cause and interest.

VEGETARIANISM AND SOCIALISM

Gandhi went to England to prepare himself for the lucrative legal profession. At the time of his departure from London, after completion of his study, he was asked by a representative of the *Vegetarian* as to why he had come to London and had chosen the legal profession. Gandhi replied, "In a word ambition."³⁶ But his vow before his mother not to touch meat while in England stood him in good stead. This vow not only attracted him towards vegetarianism and the cause of the masses who were vegetarians by necessity; it also forged a bond with the eminent vegetarians of England who were by conviction believers in humanitarianism and socialism, and thus helped his evolution as a socialist.

Gandhi's arrival in England synchronised with a period of intellectual upsurge in British history. It was a fascinating era replete with new ideas and fresh possibilities with the prospect of expanding horizon in every sphere of thought—philosophy, morals, religion, politics, economics, and social relations. The realm of thought was surcharged with revolutionary potentialities. "The whole structure of civilisation—morality", observed Edward Carpenter, "is being rapidly undermined. The moral aspects of property, commerce, class relations, sex-relations, marriage, patriotism, and so forth are shifting like dissolving views."³⁷ Those were the days of Simple Life Movement, Vegetarian Movement, Theosophical Society and Socialist and Anarchist propaganda. The economic and social forces were in a state of flux. The search for a new way of life took the form of a Nature and Humanitarian and Socialist Movement. Side by side with the Thoreau Societies and Walt Whitman Groups, there grew up the Socialist League, the Sheffield Socialist Group and the Fellowship of New Life "for the peaceful regeneration of society by the cultivation of individual perfection", of which Ramsay Macdonald was a founder member and from which the Fabian Society sprang up. The Independent Labour Party was formed in 1887 and the Fabian Society was popularising socialism during the period Gandhi

was in England. The English version of the first volume of "*Das Kapital*", of Karl Marx had just appeared in 1887. In 1889, the Fabian Essays were published by Bernard Shaw. Kropotkin's Mutual Aid was appearing serially in the Nineteenth Century and while living in England as an exile, he was propagating his ideas. Hence it has been observed : "The England to which Mohan went was the England of the Sydney Webbs and Bernard Shaw, Bradlaugh and Annie Besant, Keir Hardie and John Burns, Edward Carpenter and Henry Salt, William Howard and Havelock Ellis, Sydney Olivier, Hyndman and Ramsay Macdonald."³⁸

Thus Gandhi arrived in England when socialist ideas were in ferment and socialist movements and organisations with egalitarian philosophy were slowly but surely making their impact in England. British socialism during those days was of course in a state of infancy. It was more in the nature of an exuberant upsurge of the egalitarian spirit in a state of adolescence rather than a body of systematic and scientific doctrine; yet an idea of these prevailing philosophies, movements and organisations is essential in order to properly understand and appreciate the evolution of Gandhi's social philosophy and particularly the texture of his socialist ideas of the later days.

Of course during his early days in England, Gandhi had nothing to do with socialism as such. His primary concern was vegetarianism. But this concern for vegetarianism drew him closer to a circle of intellectuals who were vegetarians and whose anti-vivisectionism, humanism and progressivism led them step by step to socialism. It has been said : "The English vegetarians were a motley group. Edward Carpenter was a socialist and humanitarian. So was Henry Salt. Bernard Shaw was a Fabian, Annie Besant a theosophist and a Fabian and Howard Williams a rationalist. Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland were mystics."³⁹

Thus almost all of them were to some degree socialists and belonged to the early socialist movement of Britain. Edward Carpenter who was a believer in the doctrine of state-less society, communal ownership and use of land, capital etc. was the founder of Sheffield Socialist Group of which Kropotkin and Mrs. Annie Besant were members. Henry Salt had a passion for social reform and with Edward Maitland and

Howard Williams founded the Humanitarian League. His friendship with Sydney Olivier and Ramsay Macdonald was very intimate, and they must have influenced each other profoundly. Thus it is apparent that the advocates of English vegetarianism were a set of well-meaning persons, who inspired by the vision of a new society, more rationally re-ordered, rejected the existing acquisitive civilisation and social relationship, and advocated a sweeping reform of the social order. The British Socialist Movement, the Fabian Socialist Movement and the British Labour Party cannot forget the contribution of these vegetarians and particularly that of Henry Salt and Bernard Shaw, Annie Besant and Sydney Olivier. Their vegetarianism led to their humanism and that in turn to their socialism. As it has been observed: "The leadership of the Vegetarian and Anti-Vivisection Movements in England were drawn as much from the Thoreau Societies and Walt Whitman Group as from among the Socialists and Fabians. Vegetarianism was a part of their humanitarianism, and humanitarianism of their socialism. They were socialists because they were humanitarians, and because they were humanitarians they were also drawn into the ferment of the Vegetarian Movement."⁴⁰

It was only accidental that during the days of his aping the Englishmen, that Gandhi appeared bashfully in the doorway of the Humanitarian Tea Party of Salt wearing his blackcoat and top-hat in search of a dancing master. His vegetarianism made the relationship with Salt cordial and the bond was abiding. Gradually he was drawn closer to Salt's circle of radicals, and particularly through his membership of the Executive Committee of the London Vegetarian Society, his relationship with the high priests of British Vegetarianism, who were also the standard-bearers of English Socialism during the days of its infancy, became intimate. Such relationship with these radicals and socialists proved decisive in the evolution of Gandhi's social philosophy. Although contact with such vegetarians who were also socialists was accidental, it proved amply creative in stimulating and shaping his socialist thought. As Geoffrey Ashe has very rightly observed: "Gandhi received their influences almost unmixed. It was a creative accident."⁴¹ The anti-vivisectionism of the vegetarian philosophy partially accounted for Gandhian concept of non-violent socialism or socialism

without violence and bloodshed.

Under the influence of the Vegetarian Society and due to his association with the vegetarians, who were also socialists, Gandhi's outlook became mass-oriented. His concern for the masses is evident from his essay on Indian Vegetarianism that he wrote in 1891 for the *Vegetarian*, the organ of the Vegetarian Society of London. Speaking about the basis of Indian Vegetarianism, he wrote: "Some are so voluntarily and others compulsorily. The latter though always willing to take, are yet too poor to buy meat. This statement will be borne out by the fact that there are thousands in India who have to live on one pice ($\frac{1}{2}$ d) a day. These live on bread and salt, a heavily taxed article; for even in a poverty-stricken country like India it will be pretty difficult if not utterly impossible to get eatable flesh-meat for $\frac{1}{3}$ d."⁴²

Writing in the "Foods of India" that appeared in the *Vegetarian*, he gave expression to an identical feeling: "Some of them are so (vegetarians) because of their religion, while others are compelled to live on vegetable foods because they can not afford to pay for meat. This will be quite clear to you when I tell you that there are millions in India who live upon one pice—i.e., one third of a penny a day and even in a poverty-stricken country like India you can not get eatable meat for that sum. These poor people have only one meal per day and that consists of stale bread and salt, a heavily taxed article."⁴³

The three articles he wrote on Hindu festivals display his sympathy for the masses and their culture and outlook. As Geoffrey Ashe has observed: "Though he complains mildly about obscene language, the articles show sympathy towards the masses who take part in the festivities. They could not have been written by a prig or a snob."⁴⁴

Gandhi's association with the high priests of British vegetarianism who were equally zealous about egalitarian reorganisation of society not only affected his thought process and gave a "mass" orientation to it; under their influence he also gave up the life of luxury and punctiliousness that had become a part of his habit since he started aping the English gentlemen. He started reshaping his life and habits so as to come closer to the masses. At the initial stage of this transformation he simplified his habits and almost cut his expenses

to a half. Subsequently he sliced it down further so as to be accommodated within a more modest means. Of course the "modest means of my family" and the "struggling brother" who nobly responded to his call for monetary help partially weighed the balance in favour of his simple life and economy in living; but the decisive factor was his concern for the misery of the millions and particularly the misery of many students for whom life was a continuous struggle. "I had before me" says Gandhi "examples of much simpler living. I came across a fair number of poor students living more humbly than I. One of them was staying in the slums in a room at two shillings a week and living on two pence of cocoa and bread for meal from Lockhart's cheap Cocoa Rooms."⁴⁵ Hereafter he took one room instead of two, purchased a stove and cooked his own breakfast and dinner. Such a change in life and habit confirms his inherent although less apparent desire for identification with the masses. The outward changes only reflect the inner metamorphosis that he was undergoing in the direction of attuning his hopes and aspirations to the hopes and aspirations of millions of unfortunate human beings. As Gandhi says "Let not the reader think that this living made my life by any means a dreary affair. On the contrary, the change harmonised my inward and outward life."⁴⁶

Gandhi's entry into the company of the vegetarians, was in the nature of an accident, but it proved to be a creative accident. The vegetarian seed fell on a very fertile soil and the outcome was a harvest whose quality far exceeded the quality of the seed that was sown. As Geoffrey Ashe has observed: "He emerged from their tutelage a purer Truth-worshipper, Simple Lifer, and sceptic about capitalist civilisation than they were themselves."⁴⁷

Under the influence of vegetarianism which stimulated his interest in egalitarianism, Gandhi the budding barrister, also exhibited his interest in various progressive movements of the day. The London Dockers' Strike of 1889 interested him and he went to congratulate Cardinal Manning for having helped the cause of the strikers. This indicates his early interest in labour problems and his concern for the improvement of their lot which subsequently claimed his attention on the occasion of Miners' strike in South Africa and the Ahmedabad Mill

Workers' strike. Thus Gandhi's interest in the problems of the downtrodden is signally proved, which played its part in the evolution of his socialist thought.

Charles Bradlaugh who was then termed as "member for India" attended the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress in 1889 and said : "Born of the people, trusted by the people, I will die for the people and I know no geographical or race limitations."⁴⁸ When he died, Gandhi attended his funeral with several British celebrities. Bradlaugh's love for truth was of course one of the reasons for Gandhi's love for and attraction towards the former. But what is more important, Bradlaugh's love for the people and his profession to "die for the people" must have left a profound imprint on the future Mahatma, who as a matter of fact literally died for the people. It is said : "By the time he sailed for home he had acquired most of the ideas, he was to mould into a working philosophy."⁴⁹ As another critic has observed : "His sincere respect for but differences with the British atheist and friend of India Charles Bradlaugh; his interest in the strike of London dockers; his identification with the vegetarian movement—all these were part of a philosophy of action which was to be decisive in the history of India for the next half century."⁵⁰

Gandhi's socialist ideas of course received many stimuli for their full blossoming; yet his stay in England during this formative period of his life prepared the seed-bed and had sown the seed of his socialism, which subsequently had to sprout into a mighty tree.

SOUTH AFRICAN LESSONS AND EXPERIMENTS IN SOCIALISM—1893-1914

Gandhi went to South Africa in 1893 primarily to earn an honourable living without sacrificing his sense of dignity and moral values. As he has written : "In April 1893 I set forth full of zest to try my luck in South Africa".⁵¹ Luck favoured him in South Africa. He went initially for a period of one year but remained there—except for two brief intervals—for over two decades. He went in search of fortune; but by the time he came back home he had renounced all fortunes. When he went, self was his primary consideration; but by the time he returned, self had

been sublimated and he had become a Great Soul, a Mahatma. South Africa not only laid the foundation of his Mahatmahood, but also shaped his socio-economic philosophy that 'lies at the very root of his unique character. Here in South Africa he evolved the social philosophy of surrender of self at the altar of the greatest good of the community, and the economic theory became one of egalitarianism, corporate living and common sharing of all benefits of the society. In South Africa not only his experiments in Truth, Non-violence and Satyagraha, the most valuable legacies of the Mahatma, acquired meaning and significance; also, his experiment in non-possession, community living, Bread Labour, Trusteeship and above all Sarvodaya—the vital attributes of Gandhian socialism—began and acquired reasonable validity.

(a) A Champion of the Underdogs

Gandhi thought of trying his luck in South Africa because of the unsavoury experience of his encounter with the British Political Agent of Kathiawad who believed in racial superiority. But in South Africa he had a bitter experience but a better insight in to the humiliation and exploitation which coloured people were subjected to. Indians came to South Africa as indentured labour in 1860 at the persistent request of the Natal Government. By 1890 nearly 40,000 Indians had been imported as indentured labourers.⁵² During 1890-91 some 1,50,000 Indian emigrants were settled in South Africa most of them in Natal.⁵³ In the Statute book the Indians were described as "semi-barbarous Asiatics or persons belonging to the uncivilised races of Asia". The condition of these Indians was one of semi-slavery. In the Orange Free State Indians were deprived of all rights by a special law enacted in 1888. They could stay there only as waiters in hotels or do some such menial jobs. Every Indian settling in the Transval Republic was required to register himself by paying a toll tax of £ 3. Indians could not own any immovable property except in specified locations, wards, and streets set apart for them and were not even allowed to purchase freehold land in these areas. They had no franchise. Indians could not walk on public footpaths, and might not move out of doors after 9 P.M. without a permit.⁵⁴ Indians were contemptuously called "Coolies", Indian teachers were

termed as "Coolie School Masters" and Indian traders as "Coolie merchants". When he arrived, Gandhi himself was called a "Coolie Barrister". "Natal" wrote the Cape Times "present the curious spectacle of a country entertaining a supreme contempt for the very class of people she can least do without. Imagination can only picture, the commercial paralysis which would inevitably attend the withdrawal of the Indian population from that country. And yet the Indian is the most despised of creatures."⁵⁵

Gandhi was to try his luck in such a land of inequality based on race and colour, and encounter the humiliations that the coloured Indians faced everyday. When he attended the court at Durban, he was thrown out because he would not take his turban off. Once on his way to Pretoria, the Capital of Transval, in connection with the case for which he had come to South Africa, he was forcibly removed from the first class railway compartment at Maritzburg the Capital of Natal, on the ground of colour, and left to shiver in severe cold throughout the winter night, on the railway platform. As Philip Baker has said : "In that bitter waiting room, the statesman leader of the subject peoples found the mission of his life. There began, the greatest movement of our times—the demand for equal rights, dignity and honour of all people; of whatever colour, race, religion, they might be... Henceforth he could work for the poor, for the dishonoured, for the oppressed."⁵⁶

But the experience at Maritzburg was only the beginning. For more bitter moments were to come from the white people. During the subsequent lap of his journey to Pretoria he was also insulted by the white "leader" of the coach. At Johannesburg he failed to get accommodation in a hotel because of his skin and at Pretoria the accommodation problem was not any the less acute. As Romain Rolland writes : "He was not familiar with the situation in South Africa but from the very first he met with illuminating experiences.....In Natal and particularly in Dutch Transval, he was thrown out of hotels and trams, insulted, beaten and kicked."⁵⁷ The humiliation that he suffered unfolded before him, the vision of humiliation, discrimination and exploitation the coloured people in general suffered in the hands of the white race in South Africa.

Hence when Gandhi was thrown out of the railway compart-

ment at Maritzburg to shiver in the chilly night, his sense of self-respect and dignity was of course stirred. He revolted against it. His first hand experience of the humiliating treatment which the coloured people as a whole received, in the hands of the white race steeled his determination to fight this evil practice. As he has written in his autobiography : "I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights or go back to India or should I go on to Pretoria without minding the insults and return to India after finishing the case ? It would be cowardice to run back to India, without fulfilling my obligation. The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial—only a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice. I should try, if possible to root out the disease and suffer hardship in the process. Redress for wrongs I should seek only to the extent that would be necessary for the removal of the colour prejudice."⁵⁸

Later on, Gandhi was "pushed and kicked" into the street by the police patrol before the house of President Kruger of Natal. He was not so much sorry for himself as he was for the coloured settlers in South Africa. As Gandhi has written : "The incident deepened my feeling for the Indian settlers."⁵⁹ He made an intimate study of the condition of the coloured settlers in South Africa and his personal experience confirmed his belief that immediate attention must be paid to the removal of their disabilities. Hence Gandhi felt : "I saw that South Africa was no country for a self-respecting Indian, and my mind became more and more occupied with the question as to how this state of things might be improved."⁶⁰

The issue before Gandhi following the insults and humiliations and thrashing and kicking was therefore not mere assertion of his prestige and personal dignity but vindication of the dignity of the oppressed, the underdogs, the dark-coloured people, who had reconciled themselves to disgrace and acquiesced in the wrongs heaped on them. He went to South Africa under a one-year agreement but the vindication of the rights and dignity of the coloured people, the socially wretched necessitated his stay beyond this period. He acted as the champion of their cause not for a month or a year but for over two decades. As Romain Rolland has observed : "The Indians in South Africa, were helpless. Unable to defend themselves, they were com-

pletely unorganised and demoralised. They had no leader, no one to guide them. Gandhi felt that it was his duty to defend them. He realised it would be wrong to leave. The cause of the disinherited Indians became his. He gave himself upto it and remained in Africa.”⁶¹

Gandhi staked his future and fortune for the sake of these underdogs. “He had” says Romain Rolland “a lucrative clientele in Johannesburg.. ...He gave it up to espouse poverty like St. Francis. He abandoned all ties in order to live the life of the persecuted Indians, to share their trials.”⁶² As Louis Fischer has written : “That bitter night at Maritzburg the germ of social protest was born in Gandhi.”⁶³ But the protest continued for 20 years. Gandhi espoused the cause of the socially oppressed class and was thrown into African prisons three times. After twenty years of struggle and sacrifice the rights of the socially oppressed and exploited coloured people were vindicated. This struggle in South Africa represents Gandhi’s struggle for equality, fraternity and fellowship that form the cornerstone of Gandhian socialism. “There he learnt” writes S A. Dange “the first lessons of struggle for equality, of human dignity and opposition to racialism.”⁶⁴ Here in South Africa his technique of non-violent struggle that forms part of his strategy was also perfected.

Gandhi’s crusade on behalf of the oppressed in South Africa had also another dimension. Not only did Gandhi fight for the vindication of the rights and dignity of the Indians who suffered on the ground of colour; he also championed the cause of the labourers who were subjected not only to social humiliation but also economic exploitation. He went to South Africa originally not to help the workers but to represent the well-to-do Indians. But as Gandhi has written : “Service of the poor has been my heart’s desire, and it has always thrown me amongst the poor and enabled me to identify myself with them.”⁶⁵ His identification with the cause of the labourers pointedly began when he met Balsundaram, an indentured labourer who came to him in tattered clothes and a bleeding mouth, with two of his front teeth broken. “Balsundaram’s case” Gandhi has written in his autobiography, “reached the ears of every indentured labourer and I came to be regarded as their friend.....A regular stream of indentured labourers began to

pour into my office and I got the best opportunity of learning their joys and sorrows.”⁶⁶

Gandhi's satyagraha movement in South Africa that culminated in the mass struggle of thousands of Indians for the repeal of discriminatory laws won the direct, enthusiastic and selfless participation of the labourers. About six thousand labourers of New Castle (South Africa) coal mine joined the satyagraha movement.⁶⁷ Although the financial help for the struggle came from the well-to-do Indians, “it drew its real strength from the militancy and self-sacrificing spirit of the poor, toiling sections of Indians in South Africa.”⁶⁸ In a meeting with the coal-mine owners Gandhi defended the right of the workers to go on strike to vindicate their claim.⁶⁹ As he told the coal-mine owners, “I cannot conceive a greater loss to a man than the loss of his self-respect and it is a matter of deep satisfaction to me that the labourers have realised this fundamental principle.”⁷⁰ Thus here in South Africa Gandhi emerged as the champion of labourers' cause and his bond with the working class became stronger.

(b) Evolution of the Theory of Socialism

It was in South Africa that the basic tenets of Gandhian socialism were formulated and forged. The religious fervour and spiritualism that Gandhi inherited as a family legacy, were further stirred and stimulated by his Christian contacts in South Africa. As a student in London he had, of course, read the Bhagavad Gita, the Light of Asia and the New Testament. These three books had impressed on Gandhi the significance of self-sacrifice and renunciation. “That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly.”⁷¹ But Gandhi's study of religion did not go much beyond this during his stay in London. In South Africa in the company of Mr. A.W. Baker, Mr. Coats and other Christian friends he learnt about Christianity and the Bible. He could not of course accept Jesus Christ as the “only incarnation of God and the Mediator between God and man” nor “regard Christianity as a perfect religion or the greatest of all religions.” But the study of Christianity caused a “religious ferment” in him. As he wrote later : “Though I took a path my Christian friends had not intended for me, I have remained for ever indebted to them for

the religious quest that they awakened in me.”⁷²

The newly aroused religious fervour led him to make a comparative study of religions. This study made him conscious of the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God. His study of Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism and Hinduism took him God-ward and he yearned for self-realisation. Under the influence of these religions he had the realisation that God can be reached and self can be realised only through service—service not in churches or temples but by rendering service to God’s creation, one’s fellow beings, by one’s identification with the community as a whole. As Gandhi has written in his autobiography : “If I found myself entirely absorbed in the service of the community, the reason behind it was my desire for self-realisation. I had made the religion of service, my own, as I felt that God could be realised only through service.”⁷³ Hence the communitarian feeling, the feeling of identification with the community and sublimation of self, that naturally lead to social equality, fraternity, and fellowship, which constitute the bed-rock of socialism were derived by Gandhi from a comparative study of religions.

If a comparative study of religions gave a communitarian orientation to Gandhi’s philosophy, his deep study of the Bhagavad Gita which was his “infallible guide of conduct” and a “dictionary of daily reference” profoundly aided the development of his concept of non-possession or Aparigraha and equability or Samabhava that is the very root of his trusteeship idea, which constitutes one of the pillars on which stands his theory of socialism. One who identifies his self, with the community and subscribes to communitarian idea need not renounce all his possessions and property but treat them as the property of the community and consider himself as a trustee thereof. It was in South Africa that Gandhi’s concept of trusteeship matured. As Gandhi has written : “I understood the Gita teaching of non-possession to mean that those who desired salvation should act like trustee who though having control over great possessions, regard not an iota of them as his own.”⁷⁴

Gandhi has written in his autobiography : “Three moderns have left a deep impress on my life and captivated me : Raychandbhai by his living contact; Tolstoy by his book, *The*

Kingdom of God Is Within You; and Ruskin by his *Unto This Last*.”⁷⁵ Gandhi came in contact with Raychandbhai and his ideas when in India, and even while in South Africa he often wrote to him on important spiritual issues. Tolstoy and Ruskin, he never met but was powerfully influenced by their writings and social philosophy. Along with the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible, Tolstoy’s *Kingdom of God Is Within You*, *The Gospel In Brief* and other books and Ruskin’s *Unto This Last* constitute the perennial spring from which the Gandhian socialist thought drew its perpetual sustenance, although Gandhi never met Tolstoy, he entered into correspondence with him while in South Africa. He sent a message of felicitation to Tolstoy on the latter’s 80th birthday in September 1908.⁷⁶ In his letter to Tolstoy dated October 1, 1909 Gandhi writes: “I had the privilege of studying your writings... which left a deep impression on my mind.”⁷⁷

Gandhi, recalling the influence of *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* on him writes, “Tolstoy’s *Kingdom of God Is Within You* overwhelmed me. It left an abiding impression on me.”⁷⁸ What about the message of the *Kingdom of God Is Within You*? Tolstoy posing the problem has said: “The sole meaning of human life lies in serving the world by promoting the establishment of the Kingdom of God”.⁷⁹ But this service to God or promotion of the establishment of the Kingdom of God, or the land of eternal bliss, peace and prosperity becomes possible not by the acquisition of wealth or power by means, fair or foul, but by fulfilling His message, the purpose for which God has sent one to this world,—in satisfying His demand. “The Kingdom of God cometh not with outward show”; rather “the Kingdom of God is Within You.”⁸⁰ It is by self-purification, by rendering service to God’s creation, by promoting co-operation and harmony among the creatures, that the Kingdom of God can be attained. “It demands of us” says Tolstoy “what alone is certain, rational and possible,—the service of the Kingdom of God, that is our cooperation in establishing greatest possible unity among all living beings.....”.⁸¹ But this “unity” that Tolstoy had in mind and the “co-operation” that he visualised, can be achieved not through acquisitiveness, indulging in exploitation, killing or ill-treating human beings, or inflicting suffering on others. Rather Tolstoy’s advice is: “Divide up

what you possess with others, do not gather riches, do not exalt yourself, do not steal, do not cause suffering, do not kill any one, do not do to another what you would not have done to yourself.”⁸² He said further that it is “only by recognising the equality of all men and by mutual service of one another can the greatest good that is accessible to man be realised.”⁸³

Tolstoy’s *Gospel In Brief* which preceded his *Kingdom of God Is Within You* by over a decade but which Gandhi read later, also preaches the same message. “The Kingdom of God is not in any definite time or place” says Tolstoy. “It is like lightning—here, there and everywhere.”⁸⁴ The Kingdom of God is therefore all-pervasive and omnipresent. It is within every body’s grasp provided one “makes an effort”.⁸⁵ The human effort for the attainment of Kingdom of God consists neither in prayer nor sacrifice in temples and churches⁸⁶ but in universal love and in treating each other as brothers and “sons of one father”.⁸⁷ To attain the Kingdom of God one should not have much of possession. He must beware of the riches “for your life does not depend on possessing more than others”⁸⁸; rather one should love one’s neighbour as oneself and share one’s prosperity or comforts with others.⁸⁹

Thus both the *Kingdom of God Is Within You* and the *Gospel In Brief* contain within them, sociitarian or communitarian philosophy—the philosophy of equality and fraternity, brotherhood of man and common sharing of wealth. The philosophy is not one of acquisitiveness, greed or self-aggrandizement but one that is concerned with the question of self-surrender and elevation of the community and communal welfare to a higher plane.

Tolstoy not only preached this philosophy; he practised it in his life. He distributed his vast landed estate to the peasants. He shared his property with others. He worked among the peasants to earn his up-keep and popularised the idea of bread labour advocated by a Russian peasant Bondaref. As Louis Fischer has observed: “Born in 1828 to wealth and ancient title Tolstoy abandoned high society and at the age of sixty-seven adopted the simple life: he went barefoot, wore a plain muzhik smoke and trousers, ploughed, harrowed and planted by the side of peasants.”⁹⁰ Gandhi’s social philosophy was profoundly influenced by Tolstoy. The Tolstoyan ideas of

universal love, self-surrender, non-possession, communitarian philosophy, a sense of fraternity and common sharing of wealth and possession, equality and mutual benefit, and above all the idea of bread labour, fashioned the Gandhian concept of socialism.

Speaking about the influence of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* on him, Gandhi has described it as the "Magic Spell of a Book." It was only accidentally that Gandhi laid his hand on this book. This was the first book of Ruskin that Gandhi ever read; yet it appealed to his finer sensibilities in a way as no book did ever before. "The book was impossible to lay aside", Gandhi has written "once I had begun it. It gripped me."⁹¹ As per his own admission although he made only scanty reading, "of these limited number of books the book that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in my life was *Unto This Last*."⁹²

Ruskin who renounced his ancestral property for the sake of the community, advocated the theory of "social affection" and social compassion, instead of social exploitation. His was a philosophy of self-sacrifice and self-surrender for the sake of community-welfare. Men must work for the community without expecting reward commensurate with their services and should be prepared even to die for it. They must have a sense of paternalism in relation to the community.

"Riche." Ruskin declared "are a power like that of electricity acting through inequalities or negation of itself. The force of the guinea you have in your pocket depends wholly on the default of a guinea in your neighbour's pocket."⁹³ Thus since the riches of a few in the society are inversely related to the poverty of the community, riches must be renounced in the interest of the community. Ruskin also suggested that the community shall be richer if the rich engage themselves in "lighter dinner and more work" while the poor take a comparatively heavier dinner and lighter work. Thus Ruskin was an advocate of Christian Socialism.

As Gandhi understood it, *Unto This Last* of Ruskin conveyed three messages to him : "(1) That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all, (2) That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work, (3) That a life

of labour i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.”⁹⁴ A little bit elaborated, according to Gandhi they have the following implications : (1) The welfare of the individual is inconceivable except in the context of the welfare of the community. Individual welfare is inextricably interwoven with the welfare of the community and it can be furthered only by promoting the good of the society. (2) There need be no difference between the wage of one and the other and both intellectual and manual labour must be paid wages as equitably as possible. Distinction between manual labour and intellectual labour should be eradicated. (3) Manual labour whether of a peasant or a handicraftsman is the only creative work. Each must earn his bread by some such work. Socialistically interpreted, according to Gandhi, *Unto This Last* contained two basic tenets of his socialist thought i.e., (1) Sarvodaya or the welfare of all, and (2) the concept of bread labour, and, abolition of the distinction between intellectual and manual labour. As Vincent Sheean has observed, “Gandhi’s peculiar mixture of idealism and practicality took from the book what he most needed, what most suited his inner nature—and specifically the idea of co-operative labour.”⁹⁵ Geoffrey Ashe felt, Gandhi derived from *Unto This Last* “a kind of agrarian communism”.⁹⁶ Hence it can well be said that Ruskin’s *Unto This Last* along with Tolstoy’s writings provided the philosophical basis for the evolution of Gandhian socialist thought.

It is sometimes argued, “In fact he misunderstood the book. The second maxim is not there, the third only doubtfully.”⁹⁷ Gandhi himself has written : “The first of these I knew. The second I had dimly realised. The third had never occurred to me.”⁹⁸ As he further felt : “I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life.”⁹⁹ Thus it may well be contended that *Unto This Last* had not much to contribute for the development of Gandhi’s socialist thought and that the concept of welfare of all or Sarvodaya and the concept of bread labour were known to him even before he read *Unto This Last*. As Geoffrey Ashe has argued, these ideas i.e. the welfare of all and the concept of bread labour and equal wage both for intellectual and manual labour were conceived by Gandhi even before he read *Unto*

This Last. As he says “He read them into the text himself out of what he described as a ‘dim realisation’ in his own mind. This dim realisation that dictated the three points was an amalgam of Tolstoy. Edward Carpenter’s Simple Life doctrine, the memory of Mariann Hill, the theory of the ashram in Hindu religion, and the theory of corporate property in Hindu law”¹⁰⁰

However it can never be doubted that reading of *Unto This Last* stirred and stimulated Gandhi’s socialist thought. Even if he had realised the significance of the concept of welfare of all and bread labour under the composite influence of the Gita, the Bible and the writings of Tolstoy, they were only “dimly realised” by him. There is no scope for scepticism that *Unto This Last* like a flash of lightning made these ideas clear to him as day-light. Gandhi was so much moved by the philosophy contained in this book that he translated the book into Gujrati and gave it the caption, *Sarvodaya* or the welfare of all.

Thus ideologically speaking the basis of Gandhian socialist thought was formed in South Africa. The Bible, the Sermon on the Mount, the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishad, the writing of Tolstoy and Ruskin and particularly the *Kingdom of God Is Within You*, the *Gospel In Brief* and *Unto This Last* furnished the ideological basis of Gandhian socialist thought. Its basic tenets i.e., the concept of bread labour, trusteeship and crowning all, the concept of *Sarvodaya*—the Gandhian picture of egalitarian society, comprehending the welfare of all as against the Western concept of the greatest good of the greatest number—were formulated and fashioned in South Africa.

Hence the booklet, *Hindu Swaraj* that constitutes Gandhi’s blue-print for Swaraj framed in 1909—during the South African interlude—under the impact of the philosophy of Tolstoy, Thoreau and Ruskin, which Romain Rolland has characterised as the “gospel of heroic love”, carried on its banner, the ideal of “welfare of the whole people”.¹⁰¹

(c) Experiments in Socialism

Gandhi was nothing if he was not practical. He was never satisfied with merely visualising truth, in discerning its essence; his life’s mission consisted in putting truth into practice. His life was full of experiments with truth. Hence while in South

Africa, not only did he discover for himself the socialist philosophy, and formulate and mould his brand of socialist thought, he also experimented it in his own life and gave an organisational form to this philosophy and thought.

According to Gandhi, one of the essential preconditions for the attainment of socialism of his conception or Sarvodaya is aparigraha or non-possession or renunciation of one's possession. Under the impact of the Gita, aparigraha or non-possession and Samabhava or equability became his creed.¹⁰² But equally under the influence of the Gita, non-possession or aparigraha was comprehended by him not in the sense of inaction and inactivity and renunciation of the world but constant and perpetual activity, utilising the products thereof not for one's own sake, but for the welfare of the community. People practising non-possession should act as the trustees of their possession on behalf of the community. As Gandhi has written : "I understood the Gita teaching of non-possession to mean that those who desired salvation shall act like the trustee who though having control over great possessions, regard not an iota of them as his own."¹⁰³

As a practical idealist, Gandhi not only subscribed to this view; he also practised non-possession in his life in the spirit of a trustee. The savings from his legal practice were meant not to add to his bank balance; he practised non-possession by diverting such savings for the cause of community welfare. From South Africa he wrote to his brother in India not to expect any financial assistance from him, "for future savings if any would be utilised for the benefit of the community."¹⁰⁴ The *Indian Opinion* that Gandhi launched to voice the grievances of the oppressed and humiliated Indians was costing him almost £ 75 a month. As Gandhi has written "I kept on pouring out my money until ultimately I was practically sinking all my savings in it."¹⁰⁵ As his letter to G. K. Gokhale written on April 25, 1910 indicates, he had devoted nearly £ 5,000 for the continuance of *Indian Opinion* and for the establishment of the Phoenix Settlement.¹⁰⁶

At the time of his return to India once in 1896 and again in 1901, costly presents were made to him that included, besides golden and silver articles, some diamonds. "The evening I was presented with the bulk of these things", says Gandhi, "I had a

sleepless night.”¹⁰⁷ He persuaded his wife and children to forego them and created a trust out of all these presents to be devoted to the service of the community.¹⁰⁸

Apart from the experiments in non-possession and trusteeship, Gandhi also experimented community living and identified his interest with that of the community. He converted his family into a smaller community or a bigger family. He shared the comforts of his family with all the inmates whether they were cooks or servants, friends or assistants. When he started his practice in Bombay before he went over to South Africa, he maintained a cook whom he treated not as a servant but as a member of the household.¹⁰⁹ Speaking about his household in Natal, Gandhi has written : “A good servant is essential in every household. But I have never known how to keep any one as a servant. I had a friend as companion and help, and a cook who had become a member of the family. I also had office clerks boarding and lodging with me.”¹¹⁰

Gandhi came in contact with the people of many faiths, creeds and communities and treated all of them as members of his family sharing his worries and woes with them. “I have known no distinction” he has written, “between relatives and strangers, country-men and foreigners, white and coloured, Hindus and Indians of other faiths, whether Musalmans, Parsis, Christians or Jews. I may say that my heart has been incapable of making any distinction.”¹¹¹ While practising law in Durban, his office clerks and other assistants were accommodated in his own household and Gandhi was meeting their expenses. Hindus and Muslims, Gujratis and Tamilians had equal access to his larger family. As he has written : “I do not recollect having ever regarded them as anything but my kith and kin. I treated them as members of my family and had unpleasantness with my wife if ever she stood in the way of my treating them as such.”¹¹² Not only some Indian clerks and office assistants stayed in his house; he had some English friends also under his roof whose expenses were being borne by him. Although some of the friends were not very happy with this arrangement, “I persisted in having them.”¹¹³

While at Johannesburg, Gandhi’s relationship with his assistants and office friends was very much intimate and cordial. “In Johannesburg” he has written “I had at one time as many

as four Indian clerks who were perhaps more like my sons than clerks.”¹¹⁴ A Scottish girl Miss Dick who joined him as a stenographer was more than an employee to him. He has written : “Before very long she became more a daughter or a sister to me than a mere typist.”¹¹⁵ Gandhi played a role in the final choice of her husband and had the “privilege to give her away in marriage.” Miss Schlesin who joined Gandhi’s firm after the departure of Miss Dick, was also a member of Gandhi’s bigger family. Mr. H. S. L. Polak who was working as an article clerk under Gandhi in South Africa, was not only a member of Gandhi household; Gandhi even acted as a mediator in the marriage of Mr. Polak and arranged an “at home” at his own expense on the occasion of this marriage. Mr. Polak was given a free hand to buy furniture for the reception rooms and to arrange refreshment for the guests.¹¹⁶ When the first baby was born to the Polaks, Gandhi was much happy and took much interest in the development of the child. As Mrs. Polak has written “This event (birth of the baby) seemed to give great joy to Mr. Gandhi and the baby became the centre of a new human relationship. Every little detail of its life was a source of great interest to him. Its weight at birth, its feeding and development, its first sign of intelligence, and its very apparent determination to have its own way, every phase of its physical and emerging mental life was of intense pleasure, no less to Mr. Gandhi than to my husband and to me.”¹¹⁷ In short for Mrs. Polak, Gandhi was a “loving and understanding elder brother.”¹¹⁸ When Mrs. Polak joined the Gandhi household there were already, besides his wife and children, a young Englishman engaged in the telegraph service and a young Indian ward besides Mr. Polak.¹¹⁹ As Herrymon Maurer has put it : “While he made his living simpler, he enlarged his household. To his family made up of his wife Kasturibai and their four sons he added more family friends of all beliefs, for among the Indians there were Hindus and Musalmans and among the Europeans there were Christians and Jews. At the marriage of a Jewish Christian couple his friends the Polaks, he served as best man and they came to live in his household.”¹²⁰

Gandhi not only broadened the scope of his family, accommodated within his household persons other than those who strictly belong to a family—even to a Hindu joint family—so as

to give it a communitarian turn; during the subsequent stage of development of his thought process, he even dissolved his larger family and merged his identity within a greater community. He practised Brahmacharya partly because of the fact it dawned upon him that procreation of children and their care militate against communitarian feeling. As a matter of fact, he broke up his household at Johannesburg to be better placed to serve the community during the Zulu Rebellion. As Gandhi writes : "During the difficult marches that had then to be performed, the idea flashed upon me that if I wanted to devote myself to the service of the community in this manner, I must relinquish the desire for children and wealth and live the life of a vana-prastha, of one retired from household cares."¹²¹

Under the influence of Ruskin and Tolstoy, Gandhi merged the identity of his family in the socialist community such as the Phoenix Settlement and the Tolstoy Farm. After reading Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, Gandhi was determined that the philosophy contained therein i.e., Sarvodaya, bread labour and abolition of the distinction between manual labour and intellectual labour, shall be concretised and a community manifesting all these ideals be instituted. As Herrymon Maurer has observed : "This book (*Unto This Last*) set off the first of the great spiritual explosions in Gandhi's life."¹²² But Gandhi who was an experimenter with truth and between whose thought and action there was no dichotomy, wanted to give institutional form to this "spiritual explosion". Speaking about his desire for the practical manifestation of the spiritual explosion, Gandhi has written : "I could not get any sleep during that night. I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book.....I arose with the dawn ready to reduce these principles to practice."¹²³ The organisational form to this idea was given by the Phoenix Settlement.

The Phoenix Settlement started by Gandhi with the collaboration of Mr. West, in the vicinity of Durban, on a one-hundred acre plot of land, was organised on the basis of a socialist commonwealth. The Settlement was divided into 3-acre plots and distributed among the inmates who were to work on land and earn their living from such labour. Gandhi had one such plot. Each inmate was also expected to work in the *Indian Opinion* press that was shifted to the Settlement and irrespective

of his intellectual attainment, colour or nationality, drew a monthly remuneration of £ 3. The Phoenix Settlement was an "agricultural colony"¹²⁴, which though never entirely stable "survived as a community and grew more gracious".¹²⁵ Although Gandhi due to his varied preoccupations connected with the problems of coloured Indians in South Africa, could remain there only intermittently, his wife and children became permanent members of the community. Mr. West lived in the settlement with his wife, mother-in-law, and sister Ada. "Ada a versatile spinster, cooked and set type and looked after the children of other families. The mother-in-law did sewing and mending with inflexible cheerfulness."¹²⁶ As Herrymon Maurer has observed : "He went to see West, proposed that the paper and its staff be moved to a farm where every one should draw the same living wage. Within a week Gandhi purchased twenty acres of land, in the country at a place called Phoenix, added eighty acres more, drew poor and well-to-do, Indians and Europeans from their occupations and established away from the cities and centres of temporal greatness, the first of his ashramas or communities for seeking after Truth. Thereafter he ate simple food put on coarse clothes, lived in flimsy houses, and shared in the work of the scullery, the fields and the latrines".¹²⁷

Like the socialist colonies carved out by the Utopian Socialists such as Robert Owen or Cabet, the Phoenix Settlement of Gandhi—his experiment in socialist commonwealth—could not of course attract a sizable number of people and families; yet it marks the maturity of the Gandhian ideas of sublimation of self and individual acquisitiveness, bread labour, elimination of differences between manual and intellectual labour and above all the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya. As Geoffrey Ashe has observed : "Phoenix, at its apex had an average resident population of half a dozen families, European and Indian. It was a miniature republic under Gandhi's spell whether he was present or not."¹²⁸

Gandhi's experiments in community living, bread labour, and elimination of distinction between manual and intellectual labour—which can be termed as Gandhian socialism—that assumed its organisational form in Phoenix Settlement attained maturity and fulfilment in the Tolstoy Farm. The Tolstoy Farm idea was originally conceived by Gandhi during the epic

satyagraha movement in South Africa, to accommodate and maintain the families of the satyagrahis during the time the latter were in prison for their participation in satyagraha.¹²⁹ Besides the Satyagrahis themselves had to be accommodated and supported when they were free between two stages of struggle. Gandhi had the vision that the struggle for getting the disabilities of the Indians in South Africa removed, was to be a "long protracted struggle" that may involve some thousands of people. He was "not free from anxiety on the score of finance."¹³⁰ As it has been observed : "Gandhi no longer had any possession to draw on, for he had given up money and law as obstacles, to the taking of duties and risks and had decided to live out his life in poverty."¹³¹ The former practice of giving monthly allowance to these families in cash "according to their need" assessed on the basis of their requisition was considered a doubtful method with scope for fraud, injustice, and unscrupulousness and was to be abandoned. "There was only one solution", Gandhi has written "for this difficulty, namely, that all the families should be kept at one place and should become members of a sort of co-operative commonwealth. Thus there would be no scope for fraud nor would there be injustice to any."¹³²

That the "co-operative commonwealth" that was devised for accommodating the dependents of the satyagrahis when they were in prison, and themselves too, when they were out of it, was christened as Tolstoy Farm, is very much significant. Tolstoy's idea of bread labour provided the basis of the community relationship and the socio-economic system, that was introduced in the Tolstoy Farm. The Tolstoyan principle of mutual love, renunciation and egalitarianism formed the core of the Farm.

The Tolstoy Farm accommodated people of Indian origin from different parts of India, professing different religions. There were people from Gujarat, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and North India and there were Hindus, Musalmans, Parsis and Christians among them.¹³³ There were both men and women, young and old. Bread labour was the bedrock of the community life. Irrespective of age and sex, caste and creed, all the inmates were expected to do some manual labour in the Farm. "The settlers worked harder on the Farm than in the prisons. It was obligatory on all, young and old, who were not engaged in the kitchen to give some time to gardening and to look after

the fruit trees.”¹³⁴

Not only manual labour was the sole condition for one's source of living in the Farm; the inmates also donned labourers' dress. As Gandhi has written : “We had all become labourers and therefore put on labourers' dress...”¹³⁵ Even Kallenbach, the philanthropic donor of 1100 acres of land that constituted the Tolstoy Farm, who had been brought up in luxury and had never known privation, was not free from the obligation of bread labour. He took a lesson in sandal-making and became the instructor of the Farm for the purpose. Carpentry section of the Farm was also under the charge of Kallenbach. As Vincent Sheean has observed : “Kallenbach a rich or at any rate, well-to-do man shared every labour and dietary experiment including the extremely early hours and the long walks Gandhi thought necessary for health.”¹³⁶

Gandhi, the brain behind the scheme, sought no exemption from manual labour. “Gandhi himself” has written Mr. P. C. Ghose, an associate of Gandhi and an ardent Gandhite “worked as an artisan, and learnt and practised the craft of a cobbler.”¹³⁷ Gandhi even sewed some jackets for use by ladies.¹³⁸ As Gandhi has written : “The weak became strong on Tolstoy Farm and labour proved to be a tonic for all.”¹³⁹

The Farm was self-sufficient and did not indulge in exploitation of others. It produced its own food articles, furniture, shoes and clothings, ladies having taken charge of the tailoring department. The Farm had a common kitchen for all the inmates who dined in a single row and were served the same dishes. Self-restraint was practised as far as possible and the standard of food harmonised with the common man's dishes. As Gandhi has written : “Our ambition was to live the life of the poorest people.”¹⁴⁰ So much of accommodation was shown to each other that the Mohammedan and Christian inmates of the Farm renounced beef-eating as a mark of respect for the Hindu members' sentiment and the Hindus took one meal a day during Ramzan as a sign of communion with the Mohammedans.¹⁴¹

Thus the Tolstoy Farm was a socialist society in miniature, grounded on the eternal socialist values of equality, fraternity and fellowship and devoid of any distinction on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. The concept of

bread labour that formed the bedrock of the system, cut the very root of exploitation and paved the way to egalitarianism. Gandhi's egalitarian ideas that had evolved so far—the principle of non-possession that had gripped him, the concept of bread labour that had become an essential element of his social philosophy and the idea of Sarvodaya or welfare of all that had overwhelmed him,—and which had found its initial manifestation in the broadening of the social and spiritual base of his family and the establishment of Phoenix Settlement found a mature manifestation in the Tolstoy Farm. Thus the Tolstoy Farm stands as a magnificent monument to Gandhi's evolution and experiment in socialism.

BEGINNING OF INDIAN EXPERIMENTS (1915-1919)

On his return from South Africa, Gandhi faced an unfavourable political climate in India. Since the days of the conservative of Lord Curzon in the first decade of the century, oppression and sabotage had been rampant and extremists and terrorists were very much active. The Indian National Congress representing the mainstream of national movement was more a show-piece and the Congress sessions were more like annual fares held during X-mas and attended by the anglicised intellectual elite and top civilians dressed in western style, whose political ambitions were confined to democratisation of legislative councils and increased recruitment of Indians into the Civil Service. The Congress had nothing to do with the masses, the peasants and workers, nor did it reflect their hopes and aspirations. As J. B. Kripalani has observed : "Political life was at a low ebb. The 1907 split at Surat had left the Congress impoverished by the withdrawal of its most active, youthful and revolutionary elements. The Congress had thereafter failed to inspire, enthuse, or educate the people. It had become a body without a soul."¹⁴² Speaking about its leadership, it has been observed by Geoffrey Ashe : "The liberals were rootless. While professing to speak for India they distrusted the masses (especially the rural masses) and lacked sympathetic contact with almost every body who had not gone to the same schools."¹⁴³

But Gandhi on his arrival in India promised to the people :

"I propose to remain in India and serve the motherland for the rest of my days." In spite of Gokhale's keenness and his own interest, Gandhi was not admitted into the Servants of India Society where he could find an opportunity to serve India. But the resolution of the Society calling upon Gandhi to "Tour round the country for one year...before the question of his joining the Servants of India Society was finally settled", prompted him to go round the country, come closer to the people and establish a rapport with the masses. Donning a peasant's uniform consisting of a shirt, a dhoti and a cheap Kashmiri cap and travelling in third class railway compartments Gandhi started his discovery of real India, the India of the masses and forged a bond of camaraderie with the masses. As it has been observed: "He soon shed the scarf and cloak, when travelling and tried to blend into the crowd of the poor. Though he always denied that he chose his clothes for public relations purposes, their value from this point of view was incontestable."¹⁴⁴

Gandhi's understanding of the problems of the masses touched his sense of compassion and he identified his life's mission with the removal of the sufferings of the masses. Hence in spite of the many sarcastic remarks showered upon Gandhi, Mr. E. M. S. Namboodiripad has acknowledged: "The one point of departure between Gandhiji on the one hand and all other politicians of those days on the other, was that, unlike the latter, Gandhiji associated himself with the masses of the people, their lives, problems, sentiments and aspirations. Politics for him was not a matter of high level debate among erudite politicians; it was a matter of selfless service in defence of people's interests and identifying oneself with everything that is of the people."¹⁴⁵

Gokhale's paternal advice to Gandhi to keep his mouth shut while keeping his eyes wide open for one year stood him in good stead in grasping the contours of socialism rather than philosophising on or popularising the doctrine. His non-admission into the Servants of India Society gave it a further fillip. Hence during the year of his probation in Indian public life, Gandhi's primary concern was establishment of socialist colonies in the pattern of Phoenix Settlement and Tolstoy Farm. The Shabarmati Ashram established during this year of probation

was a socialist society in miniature. All the inmates of the Ashram lived as members of a family and had their meals in a common kitchen. People irrespective of their caste or creed, were accommodated in the Ashram. All the inmates were committed to every form of communal work including those usually performed by untouchables. There was no servant in the Ashram and all the inmates got same pay for same work, Gandhi himself not being excluded. Hence it has been observed : "As in South Africa so in India his ashram was not exclusive, it was for all men. It was not only for Hindus, Mussalmans, Parsis, and Christians but also for those whom the Hindus treated as defiled. Shortly after the ashram was opened, an untouchable couple with a small child came to live there. The people of the ashram lived always as one family and thus there was for a time not only strain inside the ashram but a great stir of prejudice, on the outside and those who supported the ashram cut off both money and water."¹⁴⁶

The rules of the Ashram were meant to make it a real socialist society and prepare crusaders for socialism. Adherence to truth, ahimsa, celibacy, control of the palate, fearlessness and practice of hand-spinning and hand-weaving may be treated as acts of self-discipline and self-control having nothing to do with socialism. But they were meant to prepare the Ashramites for the higher objective of practising the vows of non-stealing, non-possession, equality and manual labour or bread labour, that are the very cornerstones of Gandhian concept of socialism. Mrs. Rehana Tyabji was of opinion that the various ashrams that Gandhi founded were at best lunatic asylums and the life in such ashrams was such that the sane would become somewhat insane.¹⁴⁷ Sardar Patel dubbed the ashrams as "menageries". Yet as it has been observed : "The inmates of the ashram, whatever their culture or qualifications had to set an example to the whole country by identifying themselves in their every day life with the toiling millions in fields and factories."¹⁴⁸

When Gandhi's one year period of probation expired and he broke his silence and commenced his public activities, his speeches and actions gave evidence of the convictions of a committed socialist and a champion of the underdogs, the oppressed and the exploited. On the occasion of the inauguration of the Banaras Hindu University attended by the Governor

General and a concourse of princes and potentates and academic and political celebrities, Gandhi addressed the august audience and his speech was of replete with ideas and observations that can be expected only of a convinced socialist and a champion of peoples' rights. Although politeness was never wanting, yet a fighting and crusading spirit directed against the wealthy and the privileged classes was clearly in evidence. Gandhi said : "His Highness the Maharaja who presided yesterday over our deliberations spoke about the poverty of India. Other speakers laid great stress upon it. But what did we witness in the great pandal in which the foundation ceremony was performed by the Viceroy ? Certainly a most gorgeous show, an exhibition of jewellery which made a splendid feast for the eyes of the greatest jeweller who chose to come from Paris. I compare with the richly bedecked noblemen, the millions of the poor. And I feel like saying to these noblemen : 'There is no salvation for India unless you strip yourselves of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India'." ¹⁴⁹

Continuing, he lashed out at the rich who were fattening themselves at the expense of the poor millions. He said : "Sir, whenever, I hear of a great palace rising in any great city of India, be it in British India or be it in India which is ruled by our great chiefs, I become jealous at once and I say : 'Oh it is the money that has come from the agriculturists.' Over 75 per cent of the population are agriculturists and Mr. Higgin Botham told us last night in his own felicitous language that they are the men who grow two blades of grass in the place of one. But there can not be much spirit of self-government about us if we take away or allow others to take away from them almost the whole of the results of their labour. Our salvation can only come through the farmer. Neither the lawyers, nor the doctors, nor the rich land-lords are going to secure it." ¹⁵⁰

The attack was characteristic of Gandhi, the champion of the poor and the oppressed, who were languishing in want, misery, starvation, dirt and destitution. After the speech, Gandhi was almost hounded out of Banaras and this reminds one of Marx or Bakunin being chased out from one country to the other because of the unacceptability of their revolutionary doctrine to the regime in power. But hereafter Gandhi gradu-

ally entered into the heart and soul of the masses, and became their chief spokesman. As it has been observed : "It was altogether a new voice in India's public life, the voice of a man who had risen, as it were out of India's very earth, a man, who said queer, contradictory impossible things, and yet with an urgency and a compulsion of conviction never encountered before."¹⁵¹

Gandhi's Banaras speech, chronologically speaking, marks the beginning of his public life in India.¹⁵² More accurately speaking, it marks the launching of his socialist propaganda, whereas his socialist leaning had so far found expression in experiments in socialist commonwealths in miniature. His socialist spirit was manifest in all the speeches that followed. His address to the Missionary Conference, Madras, echoed his concern for the masses. He said : "We the educated class have received our education through a foreign tongue. We have therefore not reached upon the masses. We want to represent the masses but we fail. They recognise us not much more than they recognise the English Officers. Their hearts are an open book to neither. Their aspirations are not ours. Hence there is a break."¹⁵³ Thus as it has been observed : "It came to seem that a holy man living like the poor, had spoken for the poor as against the rich."¹⁵⁴

A Hindu businessman who met Gandhi in London is reported to have said : "He was the ugliest man I had ever come across but he seemed to be in his words and ways the India of our peasantry."¹⁵⁵ An Indian politician once remarked : "He is as humble as any peasant in the country side."¹⁵⁶ Gandhi on his part realised that if 75 percent of the Indian population were peasants, any servant of India can ill-afford to neglect the farmers. But Gandhi's passion for improving the lot of the peasants was a product of his first-hand knowledge of the misery of the peasantry during his satyagraha in Champaran. As it is said : "To Gandhi Champaran meant nothing. However it was soon to mean much."¹⁵⁷

Gandhi went to Champaran to help the peasants to be relieved of the stain of Indigo. Rajkumar Shukla, an unsophisticated but insistent peasant from Bihar, succeeded in forging a lasting bond between Gandhi and the peasants of Bihar, and hence the peasantry as a whole. As Gandhi has written :

“Thus this ignorant, unsophisticated but resolute agriculturist captured me.”¹⁵⁸ When Gandhi went to rural Bihar, he was greeted by multitude of peasants and got an opportunity to intimately realise the misery of the multitude. Dr. Rajendra Prasad has given a graphic picture : “He entered the huts of some poor men, saw how they were living there and talked to little children and women. When he was leaving the village he said that India would get Swaraj only when the condition of these people would improve.”¹⁵⁹ During his tour in the district of Champaran, the hot sun of Baisakh and the strong westerly wind could not subdue his passion for communion with the peasants. As Dr. Rajendra Prasad has further observed : “In the Mahatma’s heart, there was burning a fire to see and to redress the miseries of the ryots compared with which the outward heat of the sun and the dust and sand were nothing.”¹⁶⁰

When Gandhi was served a notice by the District Magistrate, Champaran to quit the district in the interest of “public peace” he replied that he had come to the district “out of a sense of public responsibility” and with the desire for “a genuine search for knowledge.”¹⁶¹ But the sense of responsibility was none other than the responsibility to remove in every possible way the grievances of the peasants, and the “search for knowledge” implied a detailed and intimate knowledge of the oppression to which the peasants were being subjected. In violation of the Government’s order he investigated the extent of misery and exploitation that had befallen on the indigo farmers and was even ready to court imprisonment for the peasants. As Dr. Rajendra Prasad has observed : “The 18th April 1917 is a memorable day in the history not only of Champaran but of the whole of India. It was on this day that Mahatma Gandhi was preparing himself to go to jail for the sake of the poor and suffering people of the Province of Bihar.”¹⁶²

His passion for identification with the peasants and the underdogs was so overwhelming that in the Magistrate’s Court where he was tried for violating the order under Section 144, Cr.P.C. he stated : “I have entered the country with the motive of rendering humanitarian and national service. I have done so in response to a pressing invitation to come and help the ryots who urge they are not being fairly treated by the indigo planters.....I feel that I could just now serve them only by

remaining in their midst.”¹⁶³ When he was offered clemency, “If you leave the district now and promise not to return, the case against you would be withdrawn”, he replied, “That cannot be. Not to speak of this time alone, I shall make Champaran my home even after my return from jail.”¹⁶⁴

Not only the case against Gandhi was withdrawn; he was acknowledged as the champion of the rights of the peasants and was nominated a member of the Commission of Enquiry set up by the Government to probe into the condition of indigo cultivators. Thus the Governor of Bihar Sir Edward Gait gave not only his own stamp of approval but also of the British Government that Gandhi was the acclaimed champion of the peasants and the oppressed. On April 29, 1917 W. A. Lewis, a civil servant at Bettiah, while writing to the District Magistrate about Gandhi’s activities, acknowledged his Messianic role among the peasants. He wrote : “He moves about in the villages asking them to lay their grievances before him; and he is transfiguring the imaginations of masses of ignorant men with vision of an early millennium.”¹⁶⁵ With his intervention the stain of Indigo cultivation of Bihar was removed and the peasants heaved a sigh of relief. From then on, before Gandhi’s mental horizon arose the vision of a social and economic structure of India, of which a free peasantry formed the cornerstone.

During his Champaran tour, the grim realities of the poverty and misery of the Indian villages began to torture Gandhi’s soul. The ryots’ ignorance was pathetic. The study of their children was completely neglected. As Gandhi has written : “The villages were insanitary, the lanes full of filth, the wells surrounded by mud and stink and the courtyards unbearably untidy. The elder people badly needed education in cleanliness. They were all suffering from various skin diseases. So it was decided to do as much sanitary work as possible and to penetrate every department of their lives.”¹⁶⁶ Thus he became poignantly aware of the filth, ignorance, sweat, labour and endless misery of the peasants who constitute the rural India.

On one occasion, Gandhi requested his wife, Kasturba to ascertain from the women in the villages why they were so untidy and did not regularly wash their clothes. One of them

replied "Look now, there is no box or cupboard here containing other clothes. The sari I am wearing is the only one I have. How am I to wash it? Tell Mahatma to get me another sari and I shall then promise to bathe and put on clean clothes every day."¹⁶⁷ Many such revelations came to Gandhi in quick succession. "This cottage was not an exception" Gandhi writes, "but a type to be found in many Indian villages. In countless cottages in India people live without a change of clothes, merely with a rag to cover their shame."¹⁶⁸

Here in Champaran Gandhi thus discovered the real India, the peasant India, India of the underfed, ill-nourished and semi-clad masses. This realisation lent a rural orientation and particularly a peasant orientation to his social philosophy or theory of socialism. Hence it has been appropriately said : "In Champaran in any case, Gandhi saw at close quarters the searing poverty of our people and the iron entered into his soul."¹⁶⁹

Gandhi's communion with the peasants fashioned during the satyagraha in Champaran, was further strengthened by his championship of the cause of the peasants of the Kheda district in Gujarat. As it has been observed : "Behind the agitation in Champaran and Kaira, there burned at white-heat a desire to improve the lot of the ryot. Mr. Gandhi had seen poverty in South Africa. Here was the starkest poverty in his own country."¹⁷⁰ By spearheading the cause of the peasants again he broadened his social philosophy and gave it a further egalitarian turn.

Normally the proletariat, the factory and mill workers are considered the vanguard of socialist revolution. Gandhi a pragmatist, who discovered that real India existed in seven lakh villages, conceived of an egalitarian society in the context of a socio-economic revolution in the condition of the peasants and the rural-folk. But he was not any the less concerned with the improvement of the lot of the factory workers nor had he any apathy for them. Rather in between his championship of the cause of the peasants of Champaran and Kheda, intervened his involvement in the agitation of mill workers of Ahmedabad. Speaking about Gandhi's involvement in the mill workers' strike in Ahmedabad, his faithful secretary Mahadev Desai has written : "Gandhiji did not go in search of Champaran, Champa-

ran drew him to itself. He did not of his own accord involve himself in the peasant's fight at Kheda, it was thrust on him. Similarly Gandhi took up the Ahmedabad Mill Labourers' struggle also at the desire of others."¹⁷¹

Gandhi first learned about the workers' discontent from Anasuyabehn, and her brother Ambalal Sarabhai, one of the influential members of the mill owners fraternity, who invited him to intervene.¹⁷² The Collector of Bombay even sought his intervention in bringing about a settlement between the mill-owners and mill workers. "I am informed" wrote the Collector "that the mill-owners will, if at all, heed only to your advice; you are also sympathetic to them and you are the only person who can explain their case to me." All the same it cannot be denied that Gandhi's interest lay in working for the down-trodden and the oppressed in all possible ways, and these invitations proved a God-sent, providing him with the opportunity to associate himself with the mill workers' grievances and champion their cause.

Gandhi not only studied the problems of the workers, their family conditions, their income and expenditure and standard of living; he gathered intimate knowledge about the inner and outer life of the mill workers and entered into the life of the workers. During this study of the mill workers' conditions, his concept of bread labour, formulated after reading the writings of Ruskin and Tolstoy, got further strengthened. Speaking about the role of the labour during the workers' strike, he said "If the workers do not work, it would be like sugar giving up its sweetness. If the sea gives up its saltiness, whence shall we get salt? If the workers give up working, the whole world would perish."¹⁷³ During the strike he emphasised on the unity and solidarity of the workers. His firm stand on the fulfilment of what he considered as the just demands of the workers, even when the workers were vacillating, and his fast until the fulfilment of these demands, helped him emerge as a real champion of workers' rights. As he said: "I shall not take my food.....till you get 35 percent increase or all of you die in the fight for it."¹⁷⁴

At Ahmedabad, Gandhi fought not only for the increase in the wage of the mill workers; he was equally concerned with vindication of their prestige and dignity. He did not accept

the offer of the mill owners who said, "We will give 35 percent increase to workers this time for your sake." Gandhi countered : "Do not give 35 percent out of pity for me, but do so to respect the workers' pledge and to give them justice."¹⁷⁵ Gandhi's championship of the cause of the mill-workers of Ahmedabad in 1918 formed only a part of his overall policy of supporting the legitimate grievances of the workers. When Ambalal Sarabhai informed Gandhi on behalf of the textile mill owners : "We will immediately concede 35 percent if you keep yourself away from them for all time in future, and leave the matters between us and the workers entirely to us", the offer was not acceptable to Gandhi. He was not prepared to sacrifice the legitimate grievances of the workers which might arise in future, for the sake of immediate gain. As it has been observed : "It was impossible that Gandhiji who always fought at the dictates of his conscience against injustice, moral turpitude and exploitation, would agree to abstain from serving labour for all time."¹⁷⁶

Thus by 1918 Gandhi had emerged as a champion of the peoples' causes. He was convinced that the sufferings of the masses whether peasants or factory workers demanded remedy. Hence it has been very aptly observed : "He was not a class-fighter in the Marxian sense, yet he came very near to the philosophy of proletarianism when he championed the masses."¹⁷⁷

SOCIALISM IN THE WAKE OF BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION (1919-1928)

The years after the first world war were propitious for the proliferation of socialist ideas in India. The Bolshevik Revolution that had shaken the socio-economic structure of Russia, apart from her political system, exerted a revolutionary impact on the neighbouring countries. The Soviet emphasis on racial equality and self-determination for all nationalities, the Soviet decree granting freedom to nations under the Czarist rule, and above all, her surrender of extra-territorial privileges in China, were themselves enough to kindle the aspirations of a subject nation like India. Because of such anti-colonial pronationalist posture of Soviet Russia, Gandhi inspite of his abhorrence for

violence, that accompanied the Bolshevik Revolution and the Soviet regime, rejected outright the scare of the "Bolshevik menace".¹⁷⁸ But the socio-economic changes that the Revolution triggered, had an added attraction for the subject people of India. Jawaharlal Nehru speaking of his own reaction about the Bolshevik Revolution, says : "It made me think of politics much more in terms of social change.....It was not merely a nationalist upsurge, or one against autocracy like the Czar's rule but a social change coming up in the people. It meant more equality."¹⁷⁹

Of course, sufficient information about Russian experiments was not available in India immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution; yet whatever little trickled out of the country, set the people thinking in the line of socio-economic equality. The post-war years were marked by an explosive situation both in the labour world and the world of the peasants. The first world war gave a fillip to the native industries but in its train, came labour problems proving the invincibility of the Marxian prophesy. Greater industrialisation and concentration of labourers in towns and cities created class consciousness. But the growing misery of the workers in the post-war world, consequent upon the inflationary tendency all around, and a slump in the industrial world, accentuated their militancy. In this context the promise of Bolshevik Revolution for the establishment of a proletarian state and an egalitarian society was reassuring. As it has been observed : "Indian working class saw in the Russian Revolution not only the path for overthrowing the British rule and exploitation, but also the abolition of its exploitation by the Indian Capitalist Class."¹⁸⁰

The unrest among workers led to the formation of trade unions, and a long trail of protests and strikes. Seamen, railwaymen, textile workers, colliery employees and other workers formed trade unions to press their demands more effectively, which climaxed in the formation of the All India Trade Union Congress in 1920, to which sixty unions were affiliated and sixty-two expressed their desire to support. "An epidemic of strikes paralysed the whole industrial organisation."¹⁸¹ Strikes gripped woollen mills, railways, jute mills, iron and steel workers and marine and dock sections. The general strike of Bombay alone claimed a support of about 200,000

workers between January 2 and February 3, 1920.¹⁸² The wave of strike spread from place to place, industry to industry, and province to province and during the first half of 1920, strike actions involved over a million and a half workers in over two hundred different instances. Lokmanya Tilak, speaking at Perambur (Madras) on December 23, 1919 had said : "The authority of workers' organisations in going to grow in the process of time and it is the workers who are going to become rulers."¹⁸³

The peasants who are normally quiescent and live in an atmosphere of fatalistic unconcern, resigned to the inevitability of fate, also experienced a quivering sensation and certain amount of commotion was visible among them, as a result of mounting hardship in the post-war years. Rise in the price of essential commodities, accompanied with a slump in the price of agricultural products and higher taxation, accentuated the discontent of the peasants. Most of the Indians who joined the British army were drawn from the rank of the peasants. Thousands of soldiers when demobilised after the war, came back to their villages to inflate the ranks of discontented peasants. Gandhi had already stoked the sense of discontent among the peasants during the Champaran satyagraha and the no-tax campaign of Kheda. The post-war discontent of the peasants sharpened their militancy. Thus as it has been observed : "As with the workers, the Post-War years witnessed a growing restiveness among broad strata of peasantry in widely separate regions of the country."¹⁸⁴ The general trend after the first world war is also evident from the observations made by D. G. Tendulkar when he says : "The year 1919 was one of the most fateful years in the history of India. All sections of the people were ready for action. Peasants were suffering acutely from the rise in prices. Industrial workers were resentful at the appalling conditions under which they had no labour and the beginning of the year saw an unprecedented outbreak of strikes."¹⁸⁵

In this surcharged atmosphere full of revolutionary potentialities, the workers and peasants, tired of the exploitation which they were subjected to for decades and centuries respectively, were taking recourse to mass action for vindication of their rights and the removal of their grievances; when talks of socio-economic equality were so much in the air, it is but natu-

ral to expect Gandhi with his concern for the masses and commitment to an egalitarian philosophy to go more socialistic. During the early years of Gandhi's acquaintance with socialism he was more a utopian, inspired by the passion of doing good to the underdogs. His socialist ideas had no resemblance to the Marxian concept of scientific socialism. During the days he championed the cause of the coloured people in South Africa, established the Phoenix Settlement, the Tolstoy Farm, or the Sabarmati Ashram, or took up the cause of the ryots of Champaran, the peasants of Kheda and the textile mill workers of Ahmedabad, he took British imperialism for granted and worked within its framework. Submitting his deposition in the court of Broomfield I.C.S. the District and Sessions Judge on March 18, 1922 Gandhi said : "I gave the government my voluntary and hearty co-operation criticising it freely where I felt it was faulty, but never wishing its destruction. Consequently when the existence of the Empire was threatened in 1899 by the Boer challenge, I offered my services to it, raised a volunteer ambulance corps and served at several actions that took place for the relief of Lady Smith. Similarly in 1906 at the time of the Zulu revolt I raised a stretcher bearer party and served till the end of the rebellion. On both these occasions I received medals and was even mentioned in despatches. For my work in South Africa, I was given by Lord Hardinge a Kaisar-i-Hind Gold Medal. When the War broke out in 1914 between England and Germany I raised a volunteer ambulance corps in London consisting of the then resident Indians in London chiefly students. Its work was acknowledged by the authorities to be valuable. Lastly, in India when a special appeal was made at the War Conference in Delhi in 1918 by Lord Chelmsford for recruits, I struggled at the cost of my health to raise corps in Kheda and the response was being made when the hostilities ceased and orders were received that no more recruits were wanted. In all these efforts at service, I was actuated by the belief that it was possible by such services to gain a status of full equality in the Empire for my countrymen."¹⁸⁶ Because of this unshakable faith in the British sense of justice and fair play and his unstinted support to Britain at the time of war, Gandhi has been accused of "serving the Empire by recruiting young men as cannon fodder for imperia-

lism's wars."¹⁸⁷

But according to the socialist philosophy advocated by Lenin during the days Gandhi entered the public life in India, imperialism was considered the very antithesis of socialism. Lenin carrying forward the Marxian theory of development of capitalism, advocated that it was not the national bourgeoisie, but imperialism, that represented the highest form of capitalism. In his book, "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism", Lenin contended that imperialism was "a direct continuation of the fundamental properties of capitalism in general". As he further said "Imperialism is capitalism in that state of development in which the domination of monopoly and finance capital has taken shape, in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance, in which the division of the world by international trusts has begun, and in which the partition of all the territory of the earth by the greatest capitalist countries have been completed."¹⁸⁸ Thus if imperialism or 'monopoly capitalism' is the final stage of capitalism, it is inconsistent with socialism and only by the elimination of imperialism, establishment of socialism can be ensured. If imperialism, provides a breathing space and a cushion to capitalism, and the process of capitalistic collapse is thereby prolonged and so also the birth pangs of socialism, the process can be shortened by snapping the imperialistic link. Hence Lenin focussed his attention on anti-imperialism which necessarily led him to advocate nationalism. The struggles for national liberation and end of imperialistic exploitation found a champion in Lenin. Thus "self-determination of nations", "political separation of these nations from alien national bodies", and "formation of an independent national state",¹⁸⁹ became the axioms of Lenin when Gandhi commenced his public life.

While canvassing support for British war efforts, in his recruiting campaign for the army, Gandhi said at Surat on August 1, 1918 : "We have got the opportunity we were looking for to help the Empire and we shall do well to avail ourselves of it fully."¹⁹⁰ But even before a year passed, Gandhi's disenchantment with the British Empire began and the year that followed i.e., 1919-20 found Gandhi a bitter critic of British imperialism. As it has been said : "In the year 1919 and 1920, three main developments led to the final alienation of Gandhi

from the system of government the British had brought to India. These were the Punjab atrocities, the treaty imposed by the victorious allies on Turkey and the so-called Rowlatt Act.”¹⁹¹

Thus the Rowlatt Act, the Jalianwalabagh massacre and the Khilaffat question made a breach in Gandhi’s faith in the British sense of justice and fair play and gradually from the position of a defender of the British Empire, he was driven to the other extreme of becoming the arch enemy of British imperialism and colonialism. This added another dimension to his socialist thought i.e., opposition to imperialism and colonialism.

Gandhi’s primary concern henceforward became dissociation with the “Satanic activity” of the “Satanic system” that British imperialism stood for. In speaking of satyagraha movement that was launched on the issue of Rowlatt legislation, Gandhi said : “It is enough for me to say that the legislation is of such a character that no self-respecting nation can accept it.”¹⁹² In his letter addressed to the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford on August 1, 1920 he indicated British imperialism for “wanton cruelty and inhumanity almost unparalleled in modern times”. He wrote : “Events that have happened during the past month, have confirmed me in the opinion that the Imperial Government have acted in the Khilaffat matter in an unscrupulous, immoral and unjust manner and have been moving from wrong to wrong in order to defend their immorality. I can retain neither respect nor affection for such a government.”¹⁹³

Gandhi’s statement in the court on the occasion of his trial by Justice R.S. Broomfield is in the nature of an impeachment of British imperialism for indulging in economic and political exploitation of Indian masses and for committing “crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history”. The statement reads : “I came reluctantly to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than she ever was before, politically and economically.....Before the British advent India spun and wove in her millions of cottages just the supplement she needed for adding to her meagre agricultural resources. This cottage industry so vital for India’s existence has been ruined by incredibly heartless and inhuman process as described by English witnesses. Little do town dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort

represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realise that the Government established by law in British India is carried on for this exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye.....The law itself in this country has been used to serve the foreign exploiter.....In my opinion, the administration of the law is thus prostituted consciously or unconsciously for the benefit of the exploiter.”¹⁹⁴

This indictment of British imperialism is no less vehement than the condemnation of Marx. It gives one an impression that it was not Gandhi but British imperialism that was in the dock. Gandhi's non-cooperation movement, his triple boycott i.e. boycott of educational institutions, councils and courts were devices to paralyse the British system of imperialism. His scheme of Swadeshi was intended to cut the very roots of imperialism. In his *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi had written in the first decade of 20th century : “The English have not taken India; we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them.”¹⁹⁵ He further wrote : “We keep the English in India for our base self-interest. We like their commerce; they please us by their subtle methods and get what they want from us.....the English entered India for the purposes of trade. They remain in it for the same purpose and we help them to do so. Their arms and ammunitions are perfectly useless.”¹⁹⁶ Thus according to Gandhi British imperialism was based on Indian co-operation, and if Indian co-operation was withdrawn, imperialism would tremble and totter and ultimately collapse like a house of cards. Since the British imperialism was a Satanic system, non-cooperation with it was almost a moral obligation. Hence Gandhi said, “In my humble opinion non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good.”¹⁹⁷ The evil system of imperialism and colonialism was accordingly challenged through non-cooperation.

Gandhi's non-cooperation with British Government in India was only symbolic of his challenge to imperialism as such. When in the Khilafat conference, Maulana Hasrat Mohani suggested as a part of the strategy of non-cooperation with British Government, boycott of British goods, Gandhi opposed

it and championed boycott of foreign goods in general not only on the "score of principle"¹⁹⁸; he was opposed to it on the ground of his over-all opposition to imperialism as such and economic exploitation and domination by any foreign nation, be it Great Britain or any other nation, Asian nations not excluded. Hence Gandhi wrote in *Navajivan* on April 25, 1920 : "If we give up European goods but continue to use Japanese goods, we shall be falling out of the frying pan into the fire."¹⁹⁹ Gandhi's anti-imperialism is evident from what he has written in *Young India* on January 12, 1928. He writes : "Personally I crave not for 'Independence' which I do not understand, but I long for freedom from the English yoke. I would pay any price for it. I would accept chaos in exchange for it. For the English, peace is the peace of the grave. Any thing would be better than this living death of a whole people. This Satanic rule has well-nigh ruined this fairland materially, morally and spiritually. I daily see its law courts denying justice and murdering truth."²⁰⁰

Not only did Gandhi expect India to bid goodbye to British imperialism and colonialism by her freedom from colonial control; she shall also pave the way for the end of colonialism and imperialist exploitation in the rest of the world. Hence he said : "My ambition is much higher than independence. Through the deliverance of India I seek to deliver the so-called weaker races of the earth from the crushing heels of Western exploitation in which England is the greatest partner."²⁰¹ As A. D. Litman has rightly observed : "Gandhi has gone in history as a fighter against imperialism and colonialism."²⁰² Thus Gandhi as an enemy of imperialism identified himself with the scientific socialists of the Leninist school.

During this period, Gandhi's rapport with the masses and his identification with their hopes and aspirations became almost total. Before the commencement of the non-cooperation movement Gandhi's influence was confined to a few towns and provinces and his followers were primarily the indigo farmers of Champaran, the peasants of Kheda and the mill workers of Ahmedabad. But the nationwide hartal in the wake of the Rowlatt Act that shook the country "from one end to the other, towns as well as villages" took Gandhi's name to the doors of the peasants and workers, the middle class, businessmen

and shopkeepers. The short-sighted policy of the Government in prohibiting his visit to Punjab, his arrest while he was on his way to Delhi and Punjab and his forcible return to Bombay endeared him to the masses, and made him their hero and a symbol of their hopes. This is amply demonstrated by the fact that his arrest was followed by a mass upsurge marked by some incidents of violence. The Jallianwala Bagh tragedy, his championship of the peoples' rights and condemnation of the atrocities drew him still closer to the masses. When Gandhi went to Punjab about six months after the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy, he was accorded a hero's welcome. As Gandhi has portrayed his experience : "The scene that I witnessed on my arrival at Lahore can never be effaced from my memory. The railway station was from end to end one seething mass of humanity. The entire populace had turned out of doors in eager expectation as if to meet a dear relation after a long separation, and was delirious with joy."²⁰³

During his stay in Punjab, his association with the Congress enquiry committee into the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy and consequent visit to a large number of places gave him an opportunity to observe the condition of the masses from very close quarters. The Amritsar Congress of 1919 made his identification with the masses still stronger. The Amritsar session of the Congress was presided over by Motilal Nehru, and Bal Gangadhar Tilak who was also present took a prominent part in the deliberations; yet as Jawaharlal Nehru has observed : "The Amritsar Congress was the first Gandhi Congress."²⁰⁴ Majority of the delegates who gathered at Amritsar looked up to Gandhi for leadership. "The slogan Mahatma Gandhi ki jai began to dominate the Indian political horizon."²⁰⁵ During the non-cooperation movement he came still closer to the masses and when he donned a loin cloth discarding garments like cap and vest, his identification with the masses became complete. His incarceration for advocating Swaraj made him almost an integral part of the semi-naked and starving people of India. His tour in the villages after his release from prison in 1924, which lasted for about four years, gave him a deeper insight into the miserable lot of the millions in the countryside. As he has described : "The more I penetrate the villages, the greater is the shock delivered as I perceive the blank stare in the eyes of the villagers I met. Having

nothing else to do but to work as labourers side by side with their bullocks, they have become almost like them.”²⁰⁶

Rabindranath Tagore’s impression of Gandhi as interpreted by Romain Rolland says : “He stopped at the thresholds of the thousands of disinherited, dressed like one of their own. He spoke to them in their own language. Here was truth at last and not only quotations from books. Mahatma, the name given by the people of India to Gandhi, is his real name. For who else had felt, like him, in communion with the people ? Felt that they are of his flesh and blood ?”²⁰⁷ Such developments in Gandhi took place during this decade i.e., 1919-1928.

During this decade Gandhi’s entire programme and activities were determined by the needs of the masses. His programme of Swaraj, non-cooperation and Swadeshi had deep down them the objective of removal of the misery of the masses. In his address at the Suppressed Classes conference held at Ahmedabad on April 13 and 14, 1921 he said : “It is idle to talk of Swaraj so long as we do not protect the weak and the helpless . . .”²⁰⁸ While addressing the Kathiawar political conference at Bhavnagar on January 8, 1925, Gandhi said : “My Swaraj takes note of Bhangis, Dheds, Dublas, and the weakest of the weak.”²⁰⁹ Thus while thinking of Swaraj, the economically exploited, oppressed and the weak, occupied the centre of Gandhian scheme of things. Hence as J. B. Kripalani has very appropriately observed : “He made it clear that the Swaraj he visualised was not merely political independence. It would be meaningless without economic and social justice.”²¹⁰

The boycott of foreign goods and Swadeshi, apart from being potent instruments to fight back imperialism and colonialism, were of positive significance to Gandhi as devices to brighten the hut and lighten the heart of the hungry millions. In a poverty-stricken country like India, with its economic backwardness, only socialistic measure must start with its emphasis on production and not distribution of the existing wealth, which would make everybody equally poor. Gandhi accepted Swadeshi as a device to reduce economic inequality by way of improving the status of the poor and the hungry millions by increasing their productivity. His emphasis on khadi and spinning sprang his vision of the poverty-ridden millions. Because of his advocacy for khadi, spinning and weaving, he had to risk the

criticism of friends and admirers like C. F. Andrews and Gurudev Tagore. His bonfire of foreign cloth evoked resentment and criticism of both; yet in khadi he found salvation for the chronic unemployment and poverty of millions. Hence while commending spinning and weaving, he wrote in *Young India* in reply to Tagore's "Call of Truth" published in *The Modern Review*: "To a people famishing and idle the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food as wages. Hunger is the argument that is driving India to the spinning wheel. The call of the spinning wheel is the noblest of all.... we must think of millions who are today less than animals, who are almost in a dying state. The spinning wheel is the reviving draught for the millions of our dying countrymen and country women Swaraj has no meaning for the millions if they do not know how to employ their enforced idleness."²¹¹

Gandhi whose heart bled at the sight of the suffering and starving humanity realised that no art, no literature, no painting and no poetry can console the starving man. It is only bread that gives strength and stamina to the body and the soul of the starving and the weak. Hence he wrote: "I have found it impossible to soothe the suffering patients with a song from Kabir. The hungry millions ask for one poem, the invigorating food. They can not be given it. They must earn it themselves. And they can earn only by the sweat of their brow."²¹²

Thus Gandhi advocated hand-spinning, hand-weaving and khadi, became the peripatetic salesman of the idea, weathered all criticisms and risked valued friendship, because he considered himself the self-chosen champion of the cause of the dumb, semi-starved and workless millions or the Daridranarayan.²¹³ His communion with the masses, the starving and the suffering millions, was so total, that whether in active politics or in the midst of political silence he busied himself in discovering the Daridranarayan throughout the length and breadth of the country. All his thought and activities were consecrated at the service of the poor.

Apart from his concern for removing the distress of the suffering humanity, the economically disabled and the socially suppressed, Gandhi wanted to restore their dignity and self-respect. The new constitution of the Indian National Congress

adopted at the Nagpur session of the party was Gandhi's creation and it devised a five-tier system of organisation having village committees at the bottom, with the avowed objective of bringing the masses into the mainstream of national politics. The annual membership fee was reduced to four annas so as to facilitate their association with the Congress. Writing in *Young India* Gandhi said : "Congress must progressively represent the masses.....We must first come in living touch with them by working for them and in their midst. We must share their sorrows, understand their difficulties, and anticipate their wants."²¹⁴ In the Belgaum session, under Gandhi's presidency, Congress decided on yarn franchise as "the most tangible method of establishing a visible and substantial bond between the masses and the Congress men and women."

Thus the Congress under his leadership ceased to be a class organisation of the lawyers, bankers, intellectuals and the middle-class people and became a mass organisation. Thus it became "a mass movement at certain times with millions of paying members".²¹⁵

During this decade i.e. 1919-1928 Gandhi's constant pre-occupation was with efforts for removing poverty and misery of the dumb and semi-starved millions. A Horace Alexander has very appropriately observed : "He had the economic needs of the half-starved Indian villagers constantly in mind; he cared far more about them than about any political issue, even the issue of independence."²¹⁶ This became Gandhi's constant endeavour and eternal pre-occupation since his discovery of the Indian masses, the Daridranarayan, during this decade.

During his discussion with Ramachandran, a student from Santiniketan on October 21 and 22, 1924, Gandhi is reported to have said "I am a socialist."²¹⁷ He went even farther and advocated nationalisation of industries producing means of production like sewing machine in order to ensure "the most attractive and ideal conditions" to labourers.²¹⁸ About a month earlier he applauded the Soviet constitution inspite of his "vital differences" with the Soviet regime, for its emphasis on the formula "no work no vote". He wrote : "The qualification under the Soviet constitution is not money, not even four annas, not landed property, not even education but honest labour. Thus the Soviet Congress is a workers' Congress. The Philoso-

phers, the Professors and all others must do some labour The important and relevant fact is that every voter has to show sound work.”²¹⁹ Towards the last part of 1928, Gandhi in spite of his abhorrence for the method of violence practised in Soviet Russia for the establishment of an egalitarian society, commended the Bolshevik ideal and its architects. As he said : “The Bolshevik ideal has behind it the purest sacrifice of countless men and women who have given up their all for its sake and an ideal that is sanctified by the sacrifice of such master spirit as Lenin can not go in vain.”²²⁰

THE MILITANT PHASE (1929-1938)

If the Bolshevik Revolution sowed the seeds for the spread of socialism in India in 1919 the world economic crisis starting in 1929 and leading to the “great crash” a year later made it appear that early realisation of the Marxian prophecy of collapse of capitalism was almost inevitable. The post first world war years saw a rapid industrialisation of India. The tempo of industrialisation brought about during the war years, continued after the war with foreign industrialists, particularly the British capitalists, considering India as a safe place for investment of their surplus capital. With this expansion of industrial sector, there came about a sharp increase in the size of the industrial proletariat. The government estimate indicated that by 1922, there were as many as 20,000,000 people in the industrial wage earning class in India.²²¹

With this rapid industrialisation came the natural concomitant – misery of millions of working people i.e., long hours of work, miserable wage rate and degrading and insanitary working conditions. This generated class-consciousness among the working class. The working class thus emerged as a militant and revolutionary force. During 1926-27 the growth of communist-inspired workers’ and peasants’ party signalled the advent of trade unionism in India. In 1928 nearly thirty-two million working days were lost on account of a wave of strikes. About 70,000 members were enrolled in the Girni Kamgar Union, the Red Flag Union of the Bombay Textile Workers, the biggest of Trade Unions in Asia. The G.I.P. Railway Union, the Jute Workers Union in Bengal and E. I. Railway

men's Union also came into being. The increasingly militant approach of the trade unions was evident from the successful six-month strike of 1,50,000 Bombay textile workers in 1928. As Prof. Hiren Mukerjee has observed: "For the first time, the new ideology of the working class—Socialism—had begun to develop and penetrate to the radical and youthful sections of Indian nationalists."²²²

But when the post-war period of boom was followed by a period of slump, there was further leftward swing of the country. Workers in the factories were made to share the common misfortune by accepting reduced wage while they did not have a share in the prosperity during the boom period. The peasants also suffered, due to fall in the price of agricultural products. The burden of their debt to the banias and the village sahu-kars (money lenders) became heavy and it was estimated that in 1930 the total debt of the peasant proprietors, smaller landlords and the tenants amounted to a colossal figure of Rs. 8,030,000,000.²²³ This figure soared still further during the period of the slump. Hence as Jawaharlal Nehru has observed: "Thus the agricultural classes, the smaller zamindars and tenants alike are sinking deeper into the morass and there is no way out except a radical way which would cut at the root of the present land system."²²⁴

Socialist and Communist ideas had already penetrated into the rank of workers and peasants. The first socialist weekly of India *The Socialist* was started in Bombay by S. A. Dange in 1923. In 1924 S. A. Dange and Muzaffar Ahmad were arrested on the charge of conspiracy but actually for spreading progressive and socialist ideas among workers. The Communist Party of India was formed in 1925. As Prof. A.R. Desai has observed: "The Post-Non-Cooperation period witnessed another development of increasingly great significance in the history of Indian national movement. It was the growth of socialist and communist groups and the rise of independent economic and political class organisations of the working class in the country."²²⁵ These progressive, leftist and socialist ideas got a further fillip during the late twenties and early thirties. The highly developed trade unions and the socialist and communist parties of England, sent a number of representatives like Fenner Brockway, Spratt, and Ben Bradley to assist the spread of trade unionism and left-

ist ideas among the workers in India. Acts of terrorism and violence were on the increase. Gandhi had himself witnessed how at the Calcutta Congress session some 50,000 industrial workers getting restive at the Congress resolution deferring the demand for Swaraj by one year, marched to the Congress pandal, saluted the Congress flag, and adopted a resolution in favour of immediate independence.

Hence the period 1929-1938 is the most important period in respect of advancement of socialist ideas in India. It witnessed two leftists and socialists, i.e. Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, becoming the President of the Indian National Congress. It also marked, the adoption of the Karachi resolution of the Indian National Congress on Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy, which was almost in the nature of a socialist programme, the formation of the Marxian Congress Socialist Party, and the coming together of the Congress Socialists and the Communists. Hence this decade may be considered as representing the high-watermark of India's socialist advance, so far as the pre-second world war era is concerned.

Gandhi with his concern for the masses, and his identification with their hopes and aspirations, could not but react favourably to the spread of socialist ideas in the country. Of course with his rejection of violent and terrorist methods, he could not but feel dismayed at the upsurge of violence, and exploitation of the situation by Communists. However during this decade his socialist ideas attained considerable maturity and his concept of non-violent socialism became more clear.

During this period, Gandhi's sympathy was more with the left than with the right, and with the rare exceptions of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, he was perhaps of all Congressmen, the most progressive, leaning towards the left, more than most of his colleagues in the party. When labour leaders, communists and terrorists, were taken into custody in connection with the Meerut Conspiracy Case and the Lahore Conspiracy Case, Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence, aligned himself with the left and the youth, although he condemned the violent activities of the "bomb throwers". When the election of the President of the Congress engaged the attention of the partymen, and Gandhi's name was on many lips, he championed the cause of an acclaimed leader of the left, Jawaharlal

Nehru. He had already written to Jawaharlal on January 4, 1928 : "You are going too fast . . . Your plunge into the Republican army was a hasty step . . . I do not know whether you still believe in unadulterated non-violence."²²⁶ Yet he supported Jawaharlal's candidature for Congress Presidentship and canvassed support for him. "My own feeling in the matter is", Gandhi wrote, "that Pandit Jawaharlal should wear the crown. The future must be for the youth of the country."²²⁷

Gandhi no doubt had admiration for Jawaharlal whose sterling integrity and transparent honesty attracted him most. Jawaharlal, son of one of his valued colleagues was all the more acceptable to him. Yet the dominant consideration was his partiality towards the youth, their dynamism and progressivism. As Gandhi said : "Older men have had their innings. The battle of the future has to be fought by younger men and women. And it is but meet that they are led by one of themselves."²²⁸

Gandhi considered himself a "back number" in the company of the youth. He realised that he could not keep pace with the march of events, and there was a hiatus between him and the youth. Yet he championed their cause more vigorously than most of their own leaders could. This stands as a clear testimony to Gandhi's leftism, dynamism, progressivism and pronounced socialist bias—rather a triumph of his socialist conviction. It is a travesty of truth to say, "Gandhi took the initiative to ensure that the leftwing movement with its face set towards socialism was brought effectively within the framework of his leadership and Jawaharlal fretting frequently found himself a prisoner of the master's charm and strategy."²²⁹

Apart from his well-known sympathy for leftist and socialist policies, his activities and pronouncements during this period also stand as a ringing and unambiguous proof of his unequivocal commitment to socialist ideas and programmes. Gandhi was taken to task by his colleagues for having come out with a compromise formula that was adopted at the Calcutta session of the Congress. That formula, it was argued, gave the British imperialism a grace period of at least one year. But his eleven-point ultimatum to the Government proves his undiminished passion, "I do not want you to water down your goal. The fire of independence is burning just as brightly in my breast as in the most fiery breast in this country." It also

proves beyond doubt his leftist and egalitarian temper. These eleven points included among other things, fifty percent reduction of land revenue, abolition of salt tax, reduction of military expenditure by fifty percent and reduction of Civil Service salaries by half. Accordingly, he said : "Independence means at least those eleven points if it means any thing at all to the masses."²³⁰ Thus the independence of Gandhi's conception was not a high sounding slogan; he emphasised more on its content and its distinctive mark was an immediate end to exploitation and extortion.

The British imperial government symbolised for Gandhi, exploitation and violence. Similar was his view of the Indian bourgeoisie. He found no hope for the masses unless their exploitation by the bourgeoisie, whether of the imperialistic or indigenous variety, was eliminated. In his letter to the Viceroy written on March 2, 1930, Gandhi had explained his objections to the continuance of British rule; this letter gives an indication of his near Marxian analysis of the problem. As he said : "It has impoverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive exploitation and by a ruinously expensive military and civil administration which the country can never afford."²³¹

Earlier he wrote in *Young India* on February 6, 1930 condemning equally vehemently the Indian privileged class. "The greatest obstacle in the path of non-violence is the presence in our midst of the indigenous interests that have sprung up from the British rule, the interests of monied men, speculators, scrip-holders, landholders, factory-owners and the like. All these do not always realise that they are living on the blood of the masses and when they do, they become as callous as the British principals whose tools and agents they are."²³² The letter to the Viceroy elaborating the eleven-point demand of the Congress is another proof of Gandhi's concern for the starving millions and his desire for the ushering in of socialism. While advocating reduction of land revenue and abolition of salt tax he said : "Not only, then has land revenue to be considerably reduced, but the whole revenue system has to be so revised as to make the ryot's good its primary concern. But the British system seems to be designed to crush the very life out of him. Even the salt he must use to live is so taxed as to make the burden fall heaviest on him if only because of the heartless impartiality

of its incidence.”²³³

In showing due courtesy to his opponents, Gandhi had perhaps no equal; yet his commitment to social justice made him have a dig at the Viceroy inspite of his personal regard for the latter and inspite of his intention not to hurt his feeling. Referring to the inequities that the office of the Viceroy was perpetuating, Gandhi wrote : “Take your own salary. It is over Rs. 21,000 per month besides many other indirect addition. The British Prime Minister gets £ 5,000 per year that is Rs. 5,400 per month at the present rate of exchange. You are getting over Rs. 700 per day against India’s average income of less than two annas per day. The Prime Minister gets Rs. 180 per day against Great Britain’s average income of nearly Rs. 2 per day. Thus you are getting much over five thousand times India’s average income. The British Prime Minister is getting only ninety times Britain’s average income . . . I know that you do not need the salary you get. But a system that provides for such an arrangement deserves to be summarily scrapped.”²³⁴

The salt satyagraha launched by Gandhi was viewed by many as quixotic and incomprehensible to ordinary mortals. On April 6, 1930 on the sea coast at Dandi at 8.30 a.m. Gandhi picked up a handful of natural salt and started his civil disobedience campaign by breaking the Salt Law. “Many sophisticated Indians and most westerners thought that the Mahatma had really taken leave of his senses this time.”²³⁵ Not only the sophisticated Indians and many sophisticated westerners doubted the efficacy of Mahatma’s move as an instrument of revolt; even for many of his ardent followers like Rajendra Prasad and Jawaharlal Nehru, the move was too mysterious to be accepted as an effective political strategy to fight British imperialism. As it has been observed by Calvin Kytte : “The Salt Laws ? Nehru and other high born members of the Congress were as astonished as the British by Gandhi’s choice for the prime target . . . Even if Gandhi were successful in organising a strike most old-style Congress leaders were at a loss to understand how the impact could possibly be big enough to set off a revolution.”²³⁶ Dr. Rajendra Prasad speaking about their reaction to the Salt Satyagraha has written : “When Mahatmaji placed this proposal before the Working Committee, many of us felt

that it could not arouse the enthusiasm and the spirit of the people particularly in places which were far from the sea coast where people get their salt only by purchasing it from traders . . . But Mahatmaji was firm in his opinion, and it was decided that it should be defied.”²³⁷

Thus the salt satyagraha as an instrument of revolt evoked only ridicule. The Governor General had laughed at the “crazy scheme” of upsetting the government with a pinch of salt. But Gandhi, the champion of the rights and privileges of the poor and the down-trodden, the starving and the incapacitated, knew its potency as a revolutionary force. A friend of the *daridranarayan*, he realised better than most of the leaders of the Congress and the Viceroy, the problems of the poor. The salt-tax was a tax which no body could escape and the “poorest among the poor who got a bit of food even after starving for two days had to pay his share of the tax, on every morsel that he ate because no body could take food without salt”.²³⁸ As it has been observed by Calvin Kytle, “Salt was the one thing that the poor man used more than the rich man. His daily requirements were more because he perspired more; he worked in sun-scorched fields in a climate where ninety degree is considered too cold for swimming. For the average peasant the annual tax was equivalent to three days income.”²³⁹

Gandhi went deep into the problems of the poor and the starving millions. While giving notice of his contemplated civil disobedience movement to the Viceroy he pointedly referred to this inequitous salt law. “The tax shows itself more burdensome on the poor man when it is remembered that the salt is the one thing he must eat more than the rich, both individually and collectively.”²⁴⁰

As a strategy to rouse the masses the salt satyagraha proved to be eminently successful. Referring to the mass upsurge at the trial of Gandhi’s violation of Salt Law, Jawaharlal Nehru has written : “As though a spring had been suddenly released” and continued, “And we marvelled at the amazing knack of the man to impress the multitude and make it act in an organised way.” Yet looked at as a socialist strategy, it was equally effective since the freedom movement came to be unmistakably conceived in terms of helping the poor and the starving millions.

The Fundamental Rights and Economic Programme resolution of the Congress adopted at the Karachi session in 1931, brings out Gandhi's basic approach to socio-economic reorganisation of the society in free India. Gandhi moved the resolution which went on to say : "In order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions."²¹¹

The Economic Programme included among other things, provision for a living wage for the industrial workers, limited hours of labour, healthy conditions of work, protection against economic consequences of old age, sickness and unemployment, emancipation of labourers from conditions bordering on serfdom, protection to women workers and the right of labour to form unions. To benefit the agriculturists, the Programme included proposals such as substantial reduction in agricultural rent or revenues paid by the peasantry and in case of uneconomic holdings, exemption from rent. The Programme wanted reduction of inequality by introducing progressive tax on agricultural income, a graduated inheritance tax and a reduction of salary of government employees. Control by the state of the key-industries, ownership by the state of mineral resources, and a curb on usury. Moving the resolution, Gandhi said : "It is meant to indicate to the poor inarticulate Indians the broad feature of Swaraj or Ram Raj . . . by passing this resolution, we make it clear to the world and to our own people what we propose to do as soon as we come into power."²¹²

Many of the proposals contained in the Programme have been incorporated in the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Indian Constitution and the Preamble of the Constitution enshrines political, social and economic justice. As Gandhi asserted in the course of his speech while moving the resolution, socio-economic reform in the direction of an egalitarian society constituted the very cornerstone of the Swaraj or Ramrajya of his conception.

Jawaharlal Nehru is given the credit for drafting the resolution which Gandhi moved. It would be more accurate to say that the Karachi Resolution on Fundamental Rights and National Economic Programme emerged out of the joint authorship of Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Referring to this matter Jawaharlal has written in his autobiography that Gandhi's atten-

tion was drawn to the formulation of an economic policy of the Congress during their morning talks in Delhi in February-March 1931, and Jawaharlal was advised to bring a draft to Karachi. Jawaharlal brought the draft and modified it in consultation with Gandhi. As Jawaharlal has written : "He asked me to bring the matter up at Karachi, and to draft the resolution and to show it to him there. I did so at Karachi, and he made various changes and suggestions. He wanted both of us to agree on the wording before we asked the Working Committee to consider it. I had to make several drafts and this delayed the matters for a few days. Ultimately Gandhiji and I agreed on a draft and this was placed before the Working Committee and later before the Subjects Committee."²⁴³

Sometimes it is argued that the purpose behind this resolution was to delude the common man and the toiling masses that the Congress was championing their cause.²⁴⁴ But this argument goes against Gandhi's well-known role as the champion of the poor and the down-trodden and a friend of the *daridranarayan*.

Even during the second Round Table conference in London which Gandhi attended, he projected the urgency to solve the misery of the starving millions. Clad only in his loin-cloth, he negotiated with the His Majesty's Prime Minister as the spokesman of starving and half-naked millions. During his voyage to England to participate in the second Round Table conference, he was asked by a correspondent of Reuter news agency to indicate his programme in London. He replied : "I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice, an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people, an India in which all communities shall live in harmony."²⁴⁵

In the conference other members of the Indian delegation were primarily concerned with Swarajya and the delegates nominated by the government were mainly concerned with the distribution of loaves and fishes; but Gandhi concentrated his attention on focussing the egalitarian content of Swaraj. The content of Swaraj that Gandhi was fighting for, was a poor man's Swaraj—a Swaraj of the starving and the half-naked. Accordingly in the forty-ninth meeting of the Federal Structure Committee held on November 19, he presented his vision of the

state under a national government. "I am afraid that for years to come India would be engaged in passing legislation in order to raise the down-trodden, the fallen, from the mire into which they have been sunk by the capitalists, by the landlords, by the so-called higher classes, and then subsequently and scientifically by the British rulers."²⁴⁶

Gandhi pleaded for providing equal opportunities for all and improving the status of the poor and the Harijans at the expense of the privileged and the "moneyed classes". The national government, according to Gandhi, would fail to fulfil its purpose unless the haves were dispossessed of their possessions and the wealth so acquired was utilised for uplifting the masses. Hence inspite of his firm commitment to non-violence he did not shrink from calling for the removal of the privileged classes from their position of social advantage, even if it spelled acute hardship for them, for the sake of relieving the misery of the millions. As he said : "If we are to lift these people from the mire, then it would be the bounden duty of the National Government of India, in order to set its house in order, continually to give preference to these people and even free them from the burdens under which they are being crushed. And if the landlords, zamindars, monied men, and those who are today enjoying privileges — I do not care whether they are Europeans or Indians—if they find that they are discriminated against, I shall sympathize with them, but I will not be able to help them even if I could possibly do so, because I would seek their assistance in that process and without their assistance, it would not be possible to raise these people out of the mire."²⁴⁷

Besides, Gandhi like other socialists insisted that the existing privileges of the wealthy sections of the society should be subjected to a judicial scrutiny the determining factor being its legitimacy. The standard of legitimacy is the service rendered to the society, and the wealth enjoyed by the rich should be in direct proportion to the services they render to the society, and not to Government officials. He felt that unless these privileges and concessions were subjected to a scrutiny the government cannot act on behalf of the "have-nots" and the "dispossessed". Making a reference to some Indian capitalists, like Sri Purusottam Dass Thakurdas and Sir Phiroze Sethna, he said : "If they have obtained concessions which have been obtained

because they did some service to the officials of the day and got some miles of land, well, if I had the possession of the Government, I would quickly dispossess them.”²⁴⁸

Gandhi even went further. Property legitimately acquired shall once again be subjected to a scrutiny by the National Government. This time, the consideration shall be “the best interests of the nation”. If the “best interests of the nation” demanded transfer of some property from private hands for public purpose, such transfer should be enforced, said Gandhi. Speaking about the “white elephant of New Delhi” he said that the palatial buildings did not mirror the interests of the millions and if the interest of the nation should so require, the posh buildings should be converted into hospitals for the benefit of millions. As he said : “If the National Government comes to the conclusion that, that place is necessary, no matter what interests are concerned, they will be dispossessed and they will be dispossessed, I may tell you, without any compensation, because, if you want this government to pay compensation, it will have to rob Peter in order to pay Paul and that would be impossible.”²⁴⁹

His Majesty’s quest-of-honour during the second Round Table conference, Gandhi preferred to stay among the labourers in the East End settlement house called the Kingsley Hall at a distance of five miles from St. James Place, the seat of the conference, in order to continue to maintain his identity and communion with the under-privileged. He turned down offers of English and Indian friends who had big houses in the heart of London and would have felt honoured to play host to the Mahatma. One day Sir Charles Trevelyan drove down to Kingsley Hall to offer residential accommodation to Gandhi, but had to return disappointed. Gandhi’s daily expenditure on food did not exceed 1s. 6d. All these go to prove his total identification with the poor and that he was a socialist not only in words but also in deed.

Gandhi availed himself of the opportunity of meeting and talking to the mill hands of Lancashire who had become unemployed because of the boycott of foreign textiles in India, a boycott authored by Gandhi himself. In spite of the adverse impact of the boycott, these unemployed workers welcomed Gandhi as one of their kith and kin. Instead of exhibiting a sense of

hostility, they crowded round him for a chance to shake hands with him. By championing the cause of the unemployed he earned their loyalty and enlisted their sympathy for the cause of Indian workers going without work. Gandhi told them : "You have three million unemployed but we have three hundred million unemployed for half the year. Your average unemployment dole is seventy shillings. Our average income is only seven shillings and six pence a month.....Even in your misery you are comparatively happy."²⁵⁰ An unemployed worker remarked, "If I were in India I'd say the same." They said, "We understand each other now." Thus Gandhi's fraternal bond with the workers overseas was cemented and his role as the champion of the underdogs and as a leader of the Left was vindicated.

In the west, socialism is conceived in terms of economic equality and equality of economic opportunity. It is contended that if economic equality and equality of economic opportunity are ensured, it leads to the emergence of an egalitarian society. In their Communist Manifesto Marx and Engels placed economic restructuring of the society at the centre of their socialist strategy. This approach is in tune with the social tradition, in the west which is free of caste-stratification and where the social status that one occupies, is directly related to the economic privileges and power he enjoys. But in a country like India, where caste stratification penetrates deep into the society, and social status is hierarchically organised on the basis of the caste system, mere economic equality cannot be a safe guide to the emergence of an egalitarian society. Thus while it is conceivable to ensure an egalitarian society in the west, by effecting changes in the economic system, in India, the caste-barrier must be broken and people of lower caste must be socially uplifted, before attempts are made to create an egalitarian society.

Since his days of experimentation with truth, non-violence and socialism in South Africa, Gandhi's sympathies had been with the depressed classes or people of inferior caste. On his return to India to participate in the national struggle, the removal of the caste barrier and upliftment of the lower caste people became an article of faith for Gandhi. This cause remained in the background in the face of the far more urgent, and wider issue of the elimination of the misery of the weaker sections as a whole.

Again, the broader issue of satyagraha or non-cooperation movement against the "Satanic regime" claimed his immediate attention and it is but natural that championing the cause of the depressed classes could not be very actively pursued. This is evident from Gandhi's expression of his conviction in *Young India*. As he writes : "If as a member of a slave nation I could deliver the suppressed classes from their slavery without freeing myself from my own I would do so today. But it is an impossible task. A slave has not the freedom even to do the right thing. Hence though the Panchama problem is as dear to me as life itself I rest satisfied with an exclusive attention to national non-cooperation. I feel the greater includes the less."²⁵¹

Of course philosophically speaking, even during the twenties Gandhi was forceful in condemning the cruel practice of untouchability disfiguring the social set-up of India and particularly, the Hindu social system. Speaking at the Depressed Classes Conference at Allahabad on April 13, 1921 he said : "I regard untouchability as the greatest blot on Hinduism."²⁵² He further added "Hinduism has sinned in giving sanction to untouchability."²⁵³ In 1925, he went to Vaikom in Kerala to support the satyagraha movement against untouchability. The object of the movement as he explained, was to "rid Hinduism of its greatest blot" and to ameliorate the "general conditions of the untouchables and unapproachables". During his tour in the year 1927, with his self-imposed silence broken, Gandhi issued a fervent call for the removal of untouchability. Speaking at Khamgaon in Central Provinces on February 8, 1927 he condemned the practice of untouchability as "fiendish or satanic",²⁵⁴ and in his address of July 26, 1927 to the 'Mythic Society' at Bangalore he branded it as a "vicious excrescence upon Hinduism".²⁵⁵ Thus he considered untouchability as India's "greatest shame" and passionately sought an end to this practice.

Gandhi's crusade against untouchability gathered militancy during the thirties. In his interview with Reuters' special correspondent, on his way to attend the second Round Table conference he made it clear that one of his objectives in attending the conference was to secure an India in which there "can be no room... for the curse of untouchability". Gandhi opposed the scheme of separate electorate for the untouchables at the Round

Table conference, for he felt that it will militate against his ideal of social integration and assimilation of the untouchables in the Indian society. Opposing the depressed class leaders' demand for separate electorate for the untouchables that had the blessing of Prime Minister MacDonald, Gandhi said : "The claims advanced on behalf of the untouchables is to me the unkindest cut of all. It means the perpetual bar-sinister. Will untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity ? I would rather that Hinduism died than that untouchability lived. I will not bargain away their rights for the kingdom of the whole world."²⁵⁶

Although Gandhi would not compromise on the issue of freedom of India, he was tempted to participate in the Round Table conference in the belief that he can help the formulation of a constitution of a free India. He said in the conference : "I would not sell the vital interests of the untouchables for the sake of winning the freedom of India."²⁵⁷ In his speech at the Minorities Committee meeting of the conference, while opposing the scheme of a separate electorate for the untouchables, he warned, "I want to say with all the emphasis that I command that, if I was the only person to resist this thing I would resist it with my life."²⁵⁸ Later when Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald announced his scheme of minority representation or what was known as the Communal Award, Gandhi literally staked his life by undertaking the "Epic Fast" of September 20, 1932.

In undertaking the fast he stated : "What I want and what I am living for, and what I should delight in dying for, is the eradication of untouchability root and branch. It is to achieve this, the dream of my life for the past fifty years that I have entered today the fiery gate."²⁵⁹

Gandhi suspended his fast on September 26 only after the acceptance of the Yeravda Pact by the British Government, that did away with the scheme of separate electorate for the untouchables. Besides, he broke his fast only after the leaders who met in Bombay in a conference adopted a resolution categorically calling for social integration and complete assimilation of the untouchables as an integral part of Indian society. The resolution read : "This conference resolves that henceforth amongst Hindus, no one shall be regarded as an untouchable by reason of his birth, and those who have been so regarded hitherto will have the same rights as other Hindus, in regard to the use of

public wells, public schools, public roads and other public institutions. This right will have statutory recognition at the first opportunity and shall be one of the earliest acts of the Swaraj Parliament.....”²⁶⁰

Before terminating the fast Gandhi sought assurances from the Inspector General of Prisons for carrying on his untouchability work uninterrupted from the jail. With the privilege conceded to him by the Government, he plunged into the cause, civil disobedience work being relegated to the background. To dispel the dilemma in the minds of the Congressmen who were outside the prison but hesitant about their objective i.e., either to conduct the civil disobedience campaign or to engage themselves in the task of removal of untouchability, Gandhi categorically said in a statement dated January 7, 1933 : “I am constitutionally unfit having entered the prison gates to guide the movement of Civil Disobedience in any shape or form. Even if I thought otherwise, I must not guide it as I have bound myself in honour not to take advantage of the considerable latitude, given to me, regarding untouchability by directly or indirectly and secretly or openly guiding the movement.”²⁶¹

While still in prison Gandhi also started the Harijan Sevak Sangh in February 1933 to serve the untouchables. In the same month the *Harijan* weekly was launched to begin a continuous campaign and create an atmosphere in the country for the abolition of untouchability. On May 8, 1933 he undertook a three-week fast with the sole purpose of impressing upon the country the urgency of the abolition of untouchability. In his telegram sent to the Government of India on May 1, 1933 he communicated that “for reasons wholly unconnected with the Government and solely connected with the Harijan movement”²⁶² he was to undertake the fast on May 8. Before the commencement of the fast he issued a statement indicating : “The fast is intended to remove bitterness, to purify the hearts and make it clear that the movement (movement for abolition of untouchability) is wholly moral, to be prosecuted by wholly moral persons.”²⁶³

The civil disobedience movement was weakened, because Congress workers had taken to Harijan welfare activities. As E.M.S. Namboodiripad has observed about Gandhi conducting Harijan welfare work from the jail : “This diverted the energy

of a large number of Congressmen outside jail from the job of organising the civil disobedience movement into that of organising Harijan welfare work.”²⁶⁴ Even Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, explaining the reduction in the number of civil disobedience prisoners from 17,000 in November to 14,000 in December 1932 declared in the House of Commons : “The interest of many Congress workers has been diverted to Mr. Gandhi’s campaign against untouchability.”²⁶⁵

To the consternation of many of his valued colleagues Gandhi suspended the civil disobedience movement in order to devote his undivided attention to Harijan welfare work. Jawaharlal Nehru was deeply shocked by the suspension of the movement. On his release from prison he wrote to Gandhi on August 13, 1934 : “When I heard that you had called off the C.D. Movement I felt unhappy. Only the brief announcement reached me at first. Much later I read your statements and this gave me one of the biggest shocks I have ever had. I was prepared to reconcile myself to the withdrawal of C.D. But the reasons you gave for doing so and the suggestions made for future astounded me.”²⁶⁶

Gandhi’s suspension of the civil disobedience movement for the purpose of devoting more time to social reform like Harijan welfare work, has sometimes been attributed to his “leadership of a class —the bourgeoisie in whose class interests he always acted”.²⁶⁷ But Sri P. C. Ghosh’s assessment that “Mahatmaji wanted to establish in India a society free from exploitation and class distinction”²⁶⁸ is closer to truth about Gandhi’s motives.

After his release from prison and the suspension of the civil disobedience movement, Gandhi concentrated his attention on Harijan welfare activities. He undertook an intensive tour of the country to collect funds for Harijan welfare work, gifted away the Sabarmati Ashram to the Harijan Sevak Sangh and moved away to Wardha never to return to Sabarmati. On the issue of Harijan welfare activities and the abolition of untouchability he even cooperated with the Government to the disappointment and chagrin of many of his colleagues.

Gandhi’s exit from the Congress in 1934 after the socialist elements in the party became highly critical of his programme and leadership, falls on the debit side of his socialist conviction.

It is true that after the withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement when these socialists formed the Congress Socialist Party within the Congress and espoused a revolutionary ideology, Gandhi found it difficult to continue in the party.²⁶⁹ But Gandhi was not opposed to the formation of the Congress Socialist Party. Although he did not like much of the programme of the party, yet he welcomed its emergence. His reaction to the formation of the party was : "I welcome the rise of the Socialist Party in the Congress."²⁷⁰ In his letter to Vallabhbhai Patel on the issue of his retirement from the Congress, he expressed his confidence "That group is bound to grow in influence and importance."²⁷¹ In a statement issued on September 17, 1934 while admitting that he had some fundamental differences with the programme of the socialists he said : "I have welcomed the formation of the socialist group. Many of them are respected and self-sacrificing co-workers. With all this, I have fundamental differences with them on the programme in their authorised pamphlets. But I would not, by reason of the moral pressure, I may be able to exert, suppress the spread of ideas propounded in their literature. I may not interfere with the free expression of those ideas however distasteful some of them may be to me."²⁷²

But Gandhi's exit from the Party is their revolutionary creed and their "loose talk about confiscation of private property and the necessity of class war".²⁷³ Much is made of his statement : "If they gain ascendancy in the Congress as they well may, I can not remain in the Congress."²⁷⁴ But in the next two sentences Gandhi explained why it was difficult for him to continue in the Party along with the socialists. As he said : "For to be in active opposition should be unthinkable. Though identified with many organisations during a long period of public service, I have never accepted that position."²⁷⁵ Hence instead of being opposed to the Congress Socialist Party he advised the Congress Socialist Party leaders : "I suggest your presenting the country with practical socialism in keeping with Indian conditions, instead of scientific socialism, as your programme has been called."²⁷⁶

Even after his withdrawal from active Congress politics, because of the espousal of class-war idea and violent technique by the members of the Congress Socialist Party, when the

Presidentship of Congress was offered to Jawaharlal Nehru a leader of the left for the second time, none was perhaps more happy than Gandhi. Expressing his confidence in Jawaharlal, Gandhi wrote : "Heavy responsibility awaits you here. It is laid on you because you are well able to bear it."²⁷⁷ At one stage it was felt that Gandhi was very much opposed to the socialist slogans of Jawaharlal. In reply to Miss Lecler who wanted a clarification on the supposed antagonism between himself and Jawaharlal, Gandhi said : "What is he doing to-day with which I can not sympathise ? His enunciation of scientific socialism does not jar on me. I have been living the life since 1906 that he would have all India to live."²⁷⁸

Thus throughout this decade Gandhi remained a socialist. Rather his socialist conviction became sharpened, during this period. After the election of 1937 when the issue of formation of Government by the Congress Party was discussed and many Congress stalwarts like Jawaharlal Nehru opposed Congress acceptance of Office, Gandhi supported the move on the plea that it shall provide an opportunity to the Party to translate into action its progressive Constructive Programme as contemplated in the Election Manifesto.

On his retirement from active Congress politics, Gandhi devoted his entire attention to Harijan welfare work, Constructive Programme and village uplift movement to level up the economic and social status of the underprivileged, thereby trying to bridge the gap between the haves and the have-nots and help the emergence of an egalitarian society. Since according to him India lived in 7,00,000 villages his picture of socialism had at its centre uplift of these villages. As J. B. Kripalani has observed : "He wanted a simple active, and purposeful life for the villages where inequalities in incomes and in standards of living were to be toned down."²⁷⁹ That became his primary concern till he was called upon to give a more effective lead to the nation.

The decade 1929-1938 is significant in one more respect from the stand-point of evolution of Gandhi's socialism. Communism had already made its appearance in India since the year 1925 and the Congress Socialist Party with many of members having Marxist leaning, was formed inside the Congress in 1934. During this decade not only Congress turned left and many Marxists joined the rank of the Congress; a United Front was

forged with the Communists. But such developments inside the Congress and in the country led Gandhi to formulate a more systematic philosophy of socialism and give a doctrinaire interpretation to his socialist conviction in the context of the emerging situation in the country.

Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence, encountered the Communists and became acquainted with their violent method during the thirties. The non-violent revolutionary that he was, he revolted against this undue emphasis on violence as an instrument of socio-economic change. To counter the violent strategy of the communists and the Marxian socialists, who derived their inspiration from Marxian emphasis on class-struggle and violent over-throw of the bourgeois regime, identified Socialism with Marxism, and considered the violent technique as inseparable from Marxism, Gandhi argued that Socialism had nothing to do with Marx, or Marxism or violence and it is inherent in Indian Culture. As he said : "Socialism was not born with the discovery of the misuse of capital by capitalists. As I have contended, socialism, even communism is explicit in the first verse of Ishopanishad."²⁸⁰

Not only socialism has nothing to do with Marxism; it has nothing to do with violence too. For the attainment of socialism, Gandhi reposed his faith on human nature, its inherent compassion for others and its passion to share welfare and suffering with one's neighbour. This communitarian nature according to Gandhi is the distinguishing characteristic that proves human superiority over brutes and stands at the very root of socialism. That according to Gandhi is the distinction between the western and particularly the Marxian approach to socialism and the Indian approach. As he said : "Socialism and communism of the West are based on certain conceptions which are fundamentally different from ours. One such conception is their belief in the essential selfishness of human nature. I do not subscribe to it for I know that the essential difference between man and the brute is that the former can respond to the call of the spirit in him, can rise superior to the passions that he owns in common with the brute and therefore superior to selfishness and violence, which belong to the brute nature and not to the important spirit of man."²⁸¹

When the Congress Socialist Party was formed, although

Gandhi welcomed it, he did not agree with much of its programme and most of its basic assumptions. Particularly the C.S.P.'s assumption of irreconcilable antagonism between the classes and the masses, and the labourers and the capitalists, was not acceptable to him. Hence he said : "I call myself a socialist. I love the very word, but I will not preach the same socialism as most socialists do."²⁸²

Gandhi withstood the assault of his communist critics by claiming that his objectives were identical with theirs. He even claimed that he made the working man's cause his own much before many of the Indian communists were born both literally and figuratively, and was the foundation member of the peasants and workers party. He even lived a life that most of the communists were incapable of living and would even envy. Addressing a labour meeting in Bombay which was disturbed by young communists he said : "You claim to be communists, but you do not seem to live the life of communism. I may tell you that I am trying my best to live up to the ideal of communism in the best sense of the term."²⁸³ Yet the communist emphasis on violence was repugnant to Gandhi. If communism could be conceivable without violence he would not hesitate to brand himself a communist. But its association with violence somehow made him shudder to accept the term to characterise his social philosophy. As he said : "What does communism mean in the last analysis ? It means a class-less society an ideal that is worth striving for. Only I part company with it when force is called to aid for achieving it."²⁸⁴

Hence according to Gandhi the essential strategy for the attainment of a class-less society, communism or socialism was not class antagonism, class-conflict or violent civil war. For Gandhi the technique was one of class-assimilation or class-cooperation. It was a question of change of heart of the capitalists, who shall voluntarily surrender a part of their privileges for the sake of improvement of the lot of their more unfortunate brethren. The technique therefore was not one of fomenting class antagonism and violent civil war but persuasion and conversion of the privileged class to the philosophy of socialism that shall precipitate socialistic action.

Thus during this decade not only Gandhi's ideas about socialism and communism took a definite shape, the strategy

for socialist transformation was also determined. If class conflict and violent civil war were at a discount as strategies to bring about an egalitarian society, and Gandhi pinned his faith on the selflessness and philanthropic character of human nature, the inevitable corollary became the strategy of Trusteeship of the rich and a comparatively voluntary socialist society rather than a compulsive one.

Gandhi's faith in man led him to believe that capitalists or landlords who represent the privileged class in the society may be made to sacrifice a part of their privileges for the sake of the poor and the under-privileged through the application of the technique of persuasion. Even if there will be no violent dispossession of the property-holders and they shall be allowed to retain their wealth or property, they shall be allowed to hold it only as trustees of the poor, getting a commission for their services. As he said : "You can not convert landlords and capitalists by violence but only by persuasion. We can tell them that they are entitled to a mass wealth, but they can not spend it in any manner they choose. They must become trustees of their own wealth."²⁸⁵

Gandhi, inspite of his faith in the inherent goodness of all individuals, as a pragmatist, realised that some members of the propertised classes may not respond to the dictate of their conscience and yield to the technique of persuasion; instead they may refuse and resist to act as trustees, holding their wealth on behalf of the society. Hence he had another ammunition in his armoury to deal with the situation. He suggested that workers and peasants should non-co operate with the capitalists or the landlords and make the latter realise that but for their co-operation, production and accumulation of their wealth would be impossible. If the workers and the peasants would become conscious of their power, the capitalists and the landlords would have no alternative but to see the reality involved in the issue and yield to the idea of trusteeship, thus paving the way for an egalitarian society without violence. Hence Gandhi said : "I expect to convert the Zamindars and other capitalists by the non-violent method and therefore there is for me nothing like an inevitability of class conflict. The moment the cultivators of the soil realise their power, the zamindari evil will be sterilised. What can the poor zamindar do, when they say that

they will simply not work the land unless they are paid enough, to feed and clothe and educate themselves and their children, in a decent manner ?.....If the toilers intelligently combine, they will become an irresistible power. That is how I do not see the necessity of class conflict.”²⁸⁶

Apart from the power of the workers and peasants to combine and non-cooperate so as to drive home to the capitalists and the landlords the point that they should act as trustees of the society, Gandhi also prescribed that there may be resort to legislative measures for effecting socialist transformation. Where the workers and the peasants are not conscious of their strength or when the capitalists and the landlords do not yield to the pressure but manipulate matters by hiring other workers or tenants, Gandhi would suggest adoption of legal coercion short of physical violence. As he said : “I believe in legislation. There is an element of coercion in it, but that can not be helped.”²⁸⁷

Since under his socialism Gandhi was prepared to allow the capitalists and the landlords to retain their wealth and property and act as the trustees, he did not feel the necessity that the State should take charge of all the private enterprises in the State or all the means of production, distribution and exchange. He believed instead that by allowing the State to handle all means of production, distribution and exchange, individuals shall be reduced to the status of moral and intellectual paupers. However he prescribed nationalisation of all key and principal industries leaving the rest under the care of private capitalists and landlords, who shall act as trustees. As he said : “I believe in the nationalisation of key and principal industries as is laid down in the resolution of the Karachi Congress. More than that I can not at present visualise. Nor do I want all the means of production to be nationalised.”²⁸⁸

THE LAST PHASE (1939-1948)

The last decade of Gandhi's life is most significant from the standpoint of his socialist thought. He was now in his seventies. About half a century of his life had been spent in championing the cause of the oppressed and the down-trodden and advocating socio-economic reform, with the ultimate objective

of establishing an egalitarian society. His socio-economic outlook that had socialistic implications had already been formed and matured by this time; yet during the years of his public life in South Africa and during the heyday of his public activities in India, his primary concern was alleviation of the misery of millions. He no doubt established during this period the Phoenix Settlement, Tolstoy Farm, the Sabarmati Ashram and the Ashram at Sevagram that were veritable socialist colonies in miniature. But neither he had the requisite leisure nor the sense of urgency to sit down quietly, and contemplate, philosophise and systematise his social outlook in order to give a comprehensive and integrated socialist doctrine. His talks about socialism and communism during the earlier periods, were more in the nature of philosophical outbursts to meet the challenge of the Marxists, communists and the socialists than a body of systematic socialist doctrines.

But during the last decade of his life, perhaps his inner voice, in whose rationality and infallibility he had profound confidence, dictated that independence is in sight. It is evident from his conversation with Louis Fischer before the commencement of the Quit India Movement that he was almost impatient about India's independence and was not even prepared to wait till the War was over. As he is reported to have said : "I am not interested in future promises. I am not interested in independence after the War. I want Independence now."²⁸⁹

Independence was not enough for Gandhi. What form independent India shall assume ? What shall be the pattern of the socio-economic system that will emerge ? He was conscious that his scheme may not be acceptable to those who shall be at the helm of affairs to shape the destiny of the nation. Yet "His mind was on things to come. Years did not matter to him because he thought in terms of the unending future. Only the hours mattered because they were the measure of what he could contribute to that future".²⁹⁰ Thus a sense of urgency had overtaken Gandhi. Writing in his Constructive Programme first published in 1941, Gandhi said : "Economic equality.....is the master key to non-violent independence. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth, on

the one hand and a levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class can not last one day in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land.”²⁹¹

Thus Gandhi’s vision of future India, an independent India, was magnificently portrayed. It is the picture of an egalitarian society free from disparity. It contemplates bridging the gap between the haves and the have-nots, the privileged and the under-privileged and pulling off, of the barrier between the rich and the poor. He was not prepared to tolerate such distinction between wealth and poverty even for “one day”. A sense of militancy and crusading spirit is visible in his approach, when he said : “A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches, and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good.”²⁹²

During his detention in the Agakhan Palace, Gandhi read the writings of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Stalin, for the first time, at the age of seventy-four. Of course he was not very much impressed by their analysis of the capitalist system and the socialists strategy advocated by them. “I would have written it better” commented Gandhi after reading the *Capital* “assuming of course, I had the leisure for study Marx had put in”. Yet he added, “I do not care whether Marxism is right or wrong. All I know is that poor are being crushed. Some thing has got to be done for them. To me this is axiomatic.” As a result of this study of Marxian literature and literature on Scientific Socialism his appreciation of and admiration for a socialist country like Soviet Russia increased. It is reported that when he was told in 1942 about the retreat of the Red Army during the Second World War, he said, “If Russia lost the war, then whom would the poor people look to.”²⁹³ It is further reported that Gandhi while addressing a public meeting in 1942, “wished success to the Russians, who had done so much for the working people”.²⁹⁴

Thus Gandhi’s study of literature on Scientific Socialism gave a fillip to his egalitarian philosophy. As Louis Fischer has very aptly observed : “As he grew older, Churchill became

more Tory, Gandhi became more revolutionary.”²⁹⁵ Now under such Marxian influence he gave a more systematic and coherent shape to his egalitarian social philosophy that had remained so far in form of occasional utterances to meet the challenge of the communists and the socialists. The Marxian interpretation of socialism, its emphasis on class antagonism, class struggle, violent civil war etc. were of course not acceptable to Gandhi, the apostle of love and non-violence. Deeply steeped in Indian cultural heritage, its tradition of love, faith in man, and non-violence, he elaborated his socialist doctrine giving it a perfectly Indian and a Gandhian look.

Earlier, although Gandhi claimed to be a socialist and a communist and entered into controversy with the socialists and the communists in respect of the strategy to be adopted for socialist transformation, he hardly bothered about the definition of socialism. Now anxious to outline the shape of things to come, he gave a clear picture of what socialism precisely implies. Writing in the *Harijan* about a month before independence Gandhi said : “Socialism is a beautiful word, and so far as I am aware in socialism, all the members of the society are equal—none low, none high. In the individual body the head is not high because it is the top of the body, nor are the soles of the feet low because they touch the earth. Even as members of the individual body are equal, so are the members of society. This is socialism. “In it the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and the employees are all on the same level. In terms of religion there is no dualism in socialism.”²⁹⁶

Thus the Gandhian definition of socialism is the picture of an egalitarian society wherefrom all distinctions arising out of birth or profession have been eliminated and a state of equality prevails. But what about the measure of equality ? What is the norm to be employed to measure such equality ?

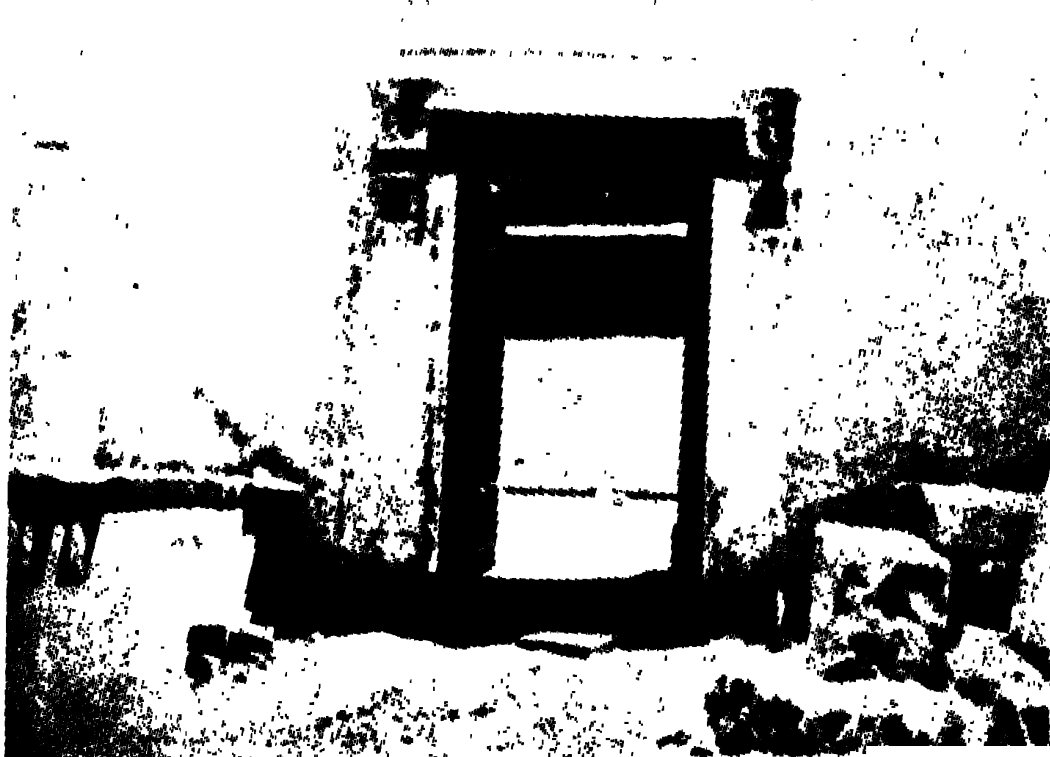
Gandhi a pragmatist and a practical idealist did not overlook the fact that absolute equality among individuals in all respects is a chimera and never forgot that by the very nature of things, all individuals can not be equal to one another in every respect. In physical features, height, weight, colour or degree of intelligence, all can not be identical. As he says : “I do not believe in dead uniformity. All men are born equal

and free is not Nature's Law in the literal sense. All men are not born equal in intellect for instance."²⁹⁷ But what he emphasised upon was economic equality. As Gandhi writes : "The basis of socialism is economic equality. There can be no Rama Rajya in the present state of inequitous inequalities in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat."²⁹⁸

But once again as a pragmatist he did not consider it an essential attribute of socialism that all individuals irrespective of their needs shall have equal claim on the wealth of the society. Such a principle of absolute economic equality among individuals shall according to Gandhi distort the very basis of an egalitarian society. Hence Gandhi said : "The real implication of equal distribution is that each man shall have the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs and no more. For example, if one man has a weak digestion and requires only a quarter of a pound of flour for his bread and another needs a pound both should be in a position to satisfy their wants."²⁹⁹

After reading Marx and Engels, Lenin and Stalin, Gandhi became more powerfully influenced by the doctrine that equality under socialism does not imply equality of unequals; his concept of equality was further reinforced by the Marxian doctrine that each shall get according to his need. Accordingly he said : "Economic equality of my conception does not mean that every one would literally have the same amount. It simply means that every body should have enough for his or her needs. The elephant needs a thousand times more food than the ant, but that is not an indication of inequality. So the real meaning of economic equality is, 'To each according to his need'. That is the definition of Marx. If a single man demanded as much as a man with wife and four children that would be a violation of economic equality."³⁰⁰

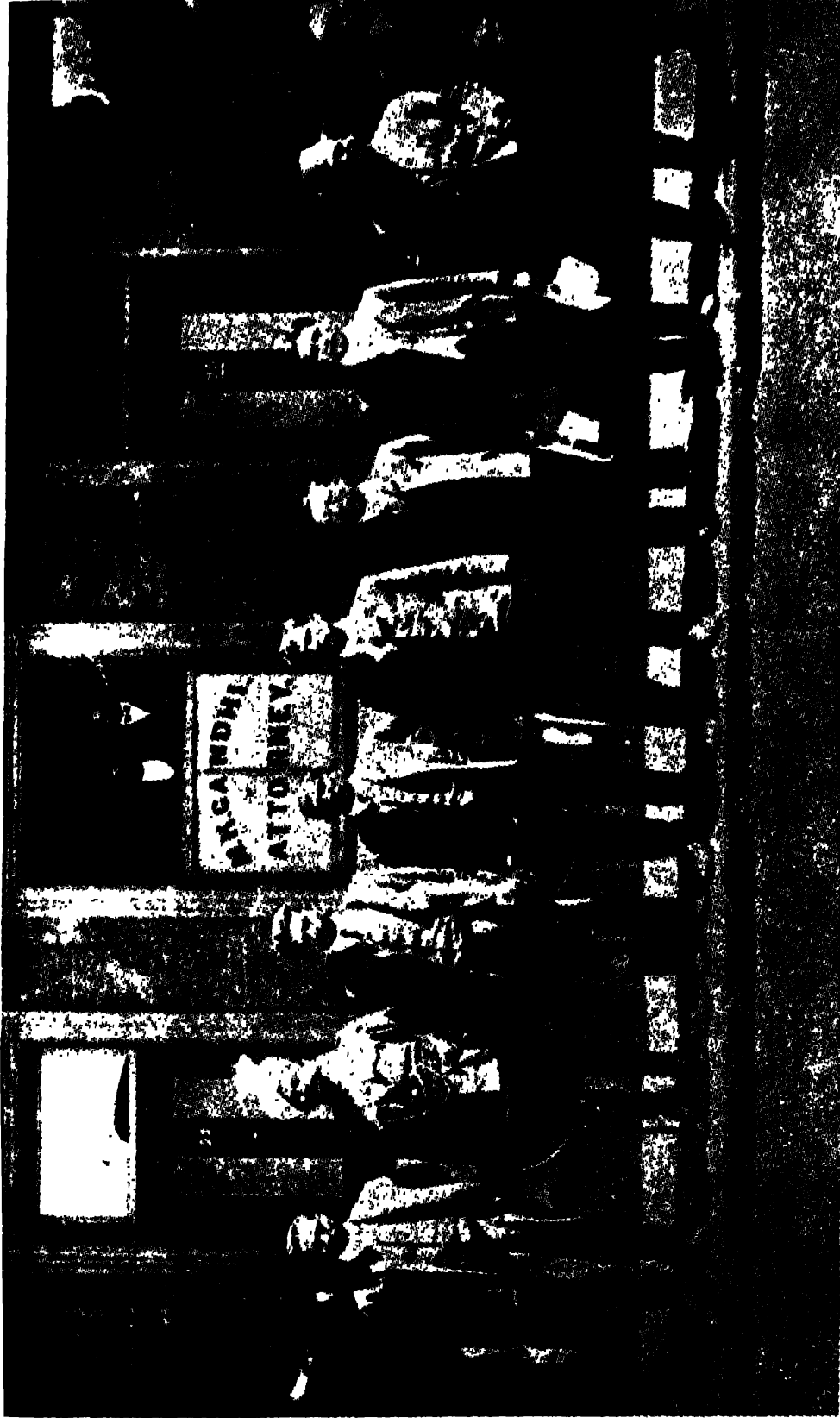
While advocating that allocation of material well-being shall be directly related to one's need, Gandhi with his legal training apprehended that the term "need" may be twisted by unscrupulous individuals who may demand special privileges from the society on the ground of their imaginary greater "need". The privileged section of the society may also defend their existing privileges on the same ground. These would make egalitarian



**Birth Place of M.K. Gandhi
the Socialist, at Porbandar Gujarat.**



The Aga Khan Palace at Pune where Gandhi was interned from August 1942 to May 1944, for his revolt against Imperialism & Colonialism.



Gandhi as a practicing barrister.



**The Primary School at Rajkot that nursed & nurtured Gandhi,
the Socialist.**

society a mockery. Hence Gandhi as a realist said : "Let no one try to justify the glaring difference between the classes and the masses, the prince and the pauper by saying that the former need more. That will be idle sophistry and a travesty of my argument."³⁰¹ Thus while Gandhi was prepared to concede to each individual, economic benefits in proportion to his need, he did not favour the idea that some shall have ostentatious living on the plea of greater need while millions are starving and are deprived of their absolute minimum in form of food, clothing and shelter. The basic need of all must be supplied first before the demands of some for additional privileges are met. As he said : "Everyone must have balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one's children, and adequate medical relief. That constitutes my picture of economic equality. I do not want to taboo every thing above and beyond the bare-necessaries, but they must come after the essential needs of the poor are satisfied."³⁰²

In this respect Gandhi's idea was akin to the view expressed by the foremost political thinker of the Twentieth Century, H. J. Laski who said : "There must be a sufficiency for all before there is a superfluity for some."³⁰³

Gandhi's concept of Bread Labour attained its final maturity during the last decade of his life. Since his days in South Africa, under the influence of the life and writings of Tolstoy and Ruskin, he advocated the idea of Bread Labour i.e., each must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. Even under the influence of the *Unto This Last*, he had a dim realisation that a lawyer and a barber are entitled to same wages.³⁰⁴ But his idea of equality of wage between intellectual and manual labour assumed its final form during this last decade of his life. In this respect Gandhi is perhaps more progressive than the communists of the Soviet Union and China, where distribution of economic rewards is made not only on the basis of quantity of services rendered to the society, but also the quality of work so rendered. That puts a premium on intellectual labour, thereby creating a new class of privileged people, while attempting to do away with class distinction altogether. But Gandhi's ideal state of society presupposes eradication of distinction between intellectual and manual labour, entitling both the categories of labour to equal pay. As he said : "I have no doubt that if India is to live an

exemplary life of independence, which would be the envy of the world, all the bhangis, doctors, lawyers, teachers, merchants and others would get the same wages as for an honest day's work. Indian society may never reach the goal, but it is the duty of every Indian, to set his sail towards that goal and no other if India is to be a happy land."³⁰⁵

It is evident from Gandhi's conversation with Louis Fischer in 1946 that after his study of Marxian literature, although he was not thoroughly impressed by the Marxian logic, and Marxian prophecy, he had developed a sense of appreciation for Marxism. Of course even in the thirties of this century he claimed that he was trying to live the life of a communist and he was a foundation member of the peasants' and workers' republic. But during his conversation with Louis Fischer he said more emphatically, "I call myself a Communist also" and continued, "My Communism is not very different from socialism. It is a harmonious blending of the two. Communism, as I have understood it, is a natural corollary of socialism"³⁰⁶ Yet Gandhi was vehemently opposed to the adoption of violent method by the communists for the attainment of an egalitarian society. Violent method was repugnant to him. In spite of the affinity in respect of the objective, the violent method prescribed and practised by the communists made communism repulsive for him. Speaking about the communists even after he developed a soft corner for Marx, he said : "I have friends among them. Some of them are like sons to me. But it seems they do not make any distinction between fair and foul, truth and falsehood. . . . Moreover they seem to take their instructions from Russia, whom they regard as their spiritual home, rather than India."³⁰⁷

Hence in respect of the technique for the attainment of an egalitarian or a socialist society, Gandhi had finally made up his mind by the last decade of his life and suffered from no hesitancy and vacillation in spite of the recent Marxian influence. An apostle of non-violence, he had been unequivocally committed to the adoption of non-violent methods for solving all individual, social and national problems and socialism was no exception to it. He had rejected outright the question of adoption of violence for the attainment of Socialist El Dorado. As he wrote in the *Harijan* : "This socialism is as pure as crystal. It therefore, requires crystal like

means to achieve it. Impure means result is an impure end. Hence the prince and the peasant will not be equalised by cutting off the Prince's head nor can the process of cutting of equalise the employer and the employed. One can not reach truth by untruthfulness. Truthful conduct alone can reach truth Therefore only truthful non-violent and pure hearted socialists will be able to establish a socialist society in India and the world."³⁰⁸

It followed from Gandhian technique of non-violence, as a direct corollary, that there was no need for fomentation of class-antagonism and class-conflict, for the emergence of a socialist society. Hence in place of class antagonism and class conflict, he advocated class harmony and class assimilation. From it followed his theory of trusteeship of the rich for their superfluous wealth. Towards the close of his life Gandhi's faith in the futility of fomentation of class-antagonism and class-conflict became further confirmed and his theory of trusteeship of the rich obtained further reinforcement. He desired to attain by persuasion and conversion of the privileged people, what the communists and the Marxian socialists plan to attain through fomentation of class-hatred and class-war. Having realised the futility of the theory of class-antagonism and class-war, he wrote in the *Harijan* : "The socialists and the communists believe in generating and accentuating hatred I shall bring about economic equality through non-violence, by converting people to my point of view, by harnessing the forces of love as against hatred."³⁰⁹

To be specific about Trusteeship, Gandhi's idea attained final maturity during this stage. Writing in the *Harijan* Gandhi said : "Supposing India becomes a free country tomorrow, all the capitalists will have an opportunity of becoming statutory trustees."³¹⁰ He further said : "As for the present owners of wealth, they would have to make their choice between class-war and voluntarily converting themselves into trustees of their wealth. They would be allowed to retain the stewardship of their possessions and to use their talent to increase the wealth, not for their own sake but for the sake of the nation and therefore without exploitation. The state would regulate the rate of commission which they would get commensurate with the service rendered and its value to society. Their children would inherit the stewardship only if they proved their fitness for

it.”³¹¹

The Gandhian concept of the role of the state also assumed its final form during this period of his life. Gandhi was throughout suspicious of the role of the state. Under the influence of Tolstoy and Thoreau, like the Marxists, he treated the state as an instrument of oppression and an apparatus of violence, and advocated that the role of the state shall be circumscribed as far as possible. But whereas the Marxian socialists in spite of their denunciation of the state as an instrument of violence and oppression, identified socialist action with state action and socialist ownership with state ownership, Gandhi's suspicion of the state was also applicable to the socialist state. Hence, as against the Marxian socialists, Gandhi instead of advocating centralisation of means of production, distribution and exchange in the hands of the state, advocated limitation of the functions of the state. As he said: “Centralisation as a system is inconsistent with the non-violent structure of society.”³¹²

Hence his ideal form of socialist economy is a decentralised system of self-sufficient village economy which also takes into account the trusteeship doctrine in respect of large scale industry. Yet although he was opposed to the idea of wholesale state ownership, as a pragmatist, he believed that certain essential industries and key industries should be the exclusive preserve of the state. As Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan*: “Hence without having to enumerate key industries, I would have State ownership where a large number of people have to work together. The ownership of the products of their labour, whether skilled or unskilled will vest in them through the State.”³¹³

Thus by the time Gandhi breathed his last he had a clear vision of the Socialist El Dorado he had in view. Not only his vision was clear; his egalitarian ideas had already assumed a systematic and coherent, theoretical form of a socialist doctrine.

Gandhi was born, bred and nurtured under a feudal order. His initial ambition was to be a cog in the feudal machine. His economic outlook, his suspicion of the huge labour-saving machines, large-scale production, and centralised ownership of means of production, distribution and exchange, and his advocacy for a decentralised, self-sufficient village economy,

small scale production, and khadi and village industries, smack of medievalism and revivalism. His deep sense of religiosity, his ethical and spiritual approach to all problems—social, economic and political—and his talk in terms of love, truth, fairplay, justice and non-violence, make him at best a medieval church father or a temple priest rather than a progressive social thinker. His rejection of Marxist socialist terminology like class-antagonism, class-conflict, violent, civil-war liquidation of the bourgeoisie and dictatorship of the Proletariat, and tolerance for the propertied class and assigning them a dignified status in his scheme of socio-economic reconstruction as trustees, make him a philosopher of the bourgeoisie.

But Gandhi was out and out a socialist, who not only espoused the cause of socialism but lived the life of a true socialist and even a true communist. From his advent into public life he was a champion of the underdogs, the underprivileged, the exploited and the down-trodden masses. As it has been very appropriately observed by a Soviet Scholar, E.N. Komarov, of the Institute of Oriental Studies, U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences : “Mahatma Gandhi sincerely sympathised with the working people and the oppressed. He dreamt of their social emancipation. He condemned bourgeois society as an exploiting system.”³¹¹

Gandhi not only espoused the cause of the exploited peasants and workers; he became one of them by renouncing his wealth and embracing poverty. His sympathy was never with any class but with the masses. His social philosophy emits the flavour of true socialism. As Gandhi himself claimed he was a non-violent revolutionary. But he was some thing more. He was a non-violent Socialist and a non-violent Communist.

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CHAPTER 2

SOURCES OF GANDHIAN SOCIALISM

Sir William Harcourt declared in 1892 that “we are all socialists now.”¹ What was true of the last decade of the nineteenth century is still more true of to-day. Socialism as a social, philosophy and a strategy for social reconstruction has become so much fashionable to-day and it dominates the popular mind in the modern world so much, that professing socialism or even paying lip service to it, lends an air of aristocracy to one’s faith, professions and action, however reactionary he may be in real terms. Ludwig Von Mises is therefore very much appropriate, when portraying the modern socialistic trend in his treatise on Socialism, he says : “Socialism is the watch-word and the catch-word of our day. The Socialist idea dominates the modern spirit. The masses approve of it, it expresses the thought and feeling of all; it sets its seal upon our time.”²

The socialist spirit has so deeply penetrated into modern mind that if proliferation of the functions of the state and increased state ownership and control of economic activities are the hallmark of modern socialist state, the British Conservatives do not signally differ from the British Labourites and if they differ at all, it is in respect of the degree and quantum of State participation in such activities. Hence it has been observed : “What makes Bolshevism strong is not the Soviet’s artillery and machine guns, but the fact that the whole world receives its ideas sympathetically.”³ If Gandhi subscribed to socialist ideology in spite of his association with the industrialists or big business like the Birlas, there is no wonder about it; yet the real point of interest in respect of Gandhian socialist ideas is the source of these ideas and the core of their nature. To take up the first

question first, what were the inspirations that shaped Gandhi's socialist thought, what are the sources to which his socialist doctrine can be traced and to whom can his indebtedness be attributed ?

SOCIAL ETHICS

The difference in emphasis in respect of the picture of the future society and the technique for the attainment of the same had led to various classifications of socialism such as Feudal Socialism, Christian Socialism, Fabian Socialism, Guild Socialism, etc. Engels simplified the problem by dividing socialism into two parts, Utopian and Scientific, all the socialist thought preceding the appearance of the *Communist Manifesto* being branded as Utopian the Manifesto having inaugurated according to him, what is known as Scientific Socialism; but in spite of the nomenclature and the qualifying clauses, all these different brands of socialism have one common inspiration. From Sir Thomas More to Mao through the socialist tradition of Marx, the moving spirit and the driving and energising force of socialism are provided by the ethical appeal of the question of socio-economic regeneration, the tearing away of the veil of tortuous system of inegalitarianism and substitution of a more rational, egalitarian and non-exploitative system. Hence C.A.R. Crossland has observed : "The only constant element common to all the bewildering variety of different doctrines consists of certain moral values and aspirations and people have called themselves socialists because they shared these aspirations, which form the one connecting link between otherwise hopelessly divergent schools of thought."⁴

Even Marx, who is accused of amoralism because of condonation of violent methods for the attainment of a socialist society was also inspired by ethical considerations. Hence as Ashoka Mehta has appropriately observed : "After all why did Karl Marx, who was such an intelligent man devote over thirty years of his life when his family was starving, when his wife was chronically ill, when he was wont to be thrown out of his rooms because he could not pay the rent, to the elaboration of socialist theory and Praxis ? He did it because the ethical appeal of socialism, was overpowering for him. It was the in-

justice rampant in the world around him that compelled Marx to turn devotedly his attention to it and develop what he has called the scientific version of socialism.”⁵

At the root of Gandhian socialism stands in equal measure his ethical outlook. His finer sensibility that is sociable was stirred and his sense of compassion for suffering humanity was stimulated by the sight of poverty, hunger, destitution and deprivation of millions of men and women, young and old, that he witnessed in a colour-ridden country like South Africa and poverty-stricken land like India. Hence his primary consideration was how to rid the society of exploitation and injustice, liberate individuals from the scourge of poverty, want, misery and destitution, and ensure enjoyment of dignified existence by all. Since the misery of millions is inversely related to concentration of wealth and prosperity in a few hands and enjoyment of luxurious life by a handful, like all socialists, Gandhi discovered the remedy in a socialist reordering of the society and the economic system. As Gandhi said: “The rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need and which are therefore neglected and wasted while millions are starved to death for want of sustenance. If each retained possession only of what he needed, no one would be in want, and all would live in contentment.”⁶

Thus ethical consideration stands at the root of Gandhian concept of socialism. So Gandhian socialism has nothing to do with the awakening of his class-consciousness although he prided in claiming that he belonged to the class of peasants and workers.

In respect of the philosophical outlook of each individual, it may well be said that it is partly an expression of his idiosyncrasy and partly a composite effect of the environment amidst which he is nurtured and the lasting impact of the creative influences on his character. Even Karl Marx’s Socialist or Communist doctrine in spite of its originality, is said to have drawn deeply from his forerunners. As M. N. Roy has observed: “Marxism was not the product of the mind of one individual. It drew upon the totality of human thought and human activity of three to four hundred years which preceded the time of Karl Marx.”⁷ Even the term “Scientific Socialism” for which so much of credit is given to its co-authors is said to have been

formulated on the lines indicated by their forerunners. As M. N. Roy has further observed : "Saint Simon called his socialism the science of universal gravitation, Pröudhon was the most exasperating; he anticipated Marx and named his doctrine Scientific Socialism."⁸ If that is so what are the external factors and influences to which Gandhian socialism can be traced ?

SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISM

Since the appearance of the *Communist Manifesto* and the *Capital*, the ideas of Marx and Engels have so profoundly influenced the thought-process of the world that no intellectual or sociological movement may be said to be completely free from their influences. All the intellectual and sociological movements since then, represent reactions either favourable or unfavourable to Marxism but they represent a reaction towards Marxism all the same. In the realm of socialism, Marxism opened a new vista and as per the claim of Engels, discovered a new region, the region of Scientific Socialism as distinguished from Utopian Socialism. Socialists of different shades since then, either accept or reject the Marxian analysis of capitalism and Marxian formulation of the theory of socialism, but they can not be indifferent to it.

Gandhi was born about 20 years after the appearance of the *Communist Manifesto* and about two years after the publication of the *Capital*. He studied in London after the demise of Karl Marx (1883). During his student days in London the English editions of the *Communist Manifesto* and the *Capital* were available. Lenin (1870-1924) and Stalin (1871-1953), the architects of Bolshevik Revolution and the founders of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic who derived their inspiration from the socialist thought of Marx and Engels were Gandhi's contemporaries. The Communist Party of India that subscribes to the Scientific socialism of Marx and Engels was formed in 1925 and the Congress Socialist Party of India was formed in 1934 by some of Gandhi's followers, who were also equally inspired by Scientific Socialism; yet as late as 1934 when Gandhi was 65 years old he said : "I do not know what Scientific Socinlism is."⁹

Until his detention in the Agakhan Palace between 1942-44,

Gandhi did not come across the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. Even when he knew what Scientific Socialism was, after reading Marxian literature, the philosophy of Scientific Socialism could not captivate his mind and influence his thought process. Although he lived in an era when Marxism was being treated as a venerable creed, Scientific Socialism of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Stalin had profound impact on the socialist thought all over the world, and he himself had great admiration for Marx and Lenin, his egalitarian philosophy did not derive its inspiration from Scientific Socialism.

As it has already been indicated earlier, the initial inspiration for Gandhi's socialism came from his ethical outlook, his concern for suffering humanity. But at the root of such ethical outlook stands firmly Gandhi's spiritualism and deep sense of religiosity. To express differently, his spiritualism and religiosity were fused together to provide the ethical foundation of Gandhian socialism. As Romain Rolland observed : "To understand Gandhi's activity it should be realised that his doctrine is like a huge edifice composed of two different floors or grades. Below is the solid ground work, the basic foundation of religion. On this vast and unshakable foundation is based the political and social campaign."¹⁰ Gandhi's spiritual and religious fervour, pushed him to the embrace of Vaishnavism, Jainism and Buddhism, the world of the Bhagvad Gita and the Upanishad, the New Testament and the Sermon on the Mount, and the writings of Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau, who lived the life and preached the philosophy contained in these great religions and scriptures. Hence if any extraneous factor influenced Gandhian social philosophy and particularly his socialist thought this can be traced to these sources.

RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES

(a) Influence of Vaishnavism and Jainism

Gandhi's profound spiritualism and deep sense of religiosity were originally derived from his Vaishnavic family tradition. In speaking about the religious atmosphere of his family Joseph J. Doke has observed : "The father was an intensely religious man. He knew the whole of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Arnold's *Song Celestial* by heart and according to the strictest manner

of the law he lived a Vaishnava.”¹¹ His mother was still more religious and “made it an atmosphere of the home”. Gandhi recalling the influence of his mother on him has written in his autobiography : “The outstanding impression my mother has left on my memory is that of saintliness. She was deeply religious.”¹² She like her husband was a devout Vaishnava. A true Vaishnava is one who completely identifies himself with the Divine, makes complete surrender to the Absolute and the Almighty, renounces his wealth and possession and showers love on his fellow beings considering them as the manifestation of the Divine Self. As Narasimha Mehta, the Gujarati poet, says in a song that was very dear to Gandhi : “Who experiences in himself the pain that another feels, who renders service to soothe another’s distress...who venerates each one in every world...whose hand does not stretch forth to touch what is not his own, Him we may call a Vaishnava. He does not fall a prey to delusion; he is not over-whelmed by material lures, his mind is incapable of attachment to things of this world, he is engrossed in his love for the name of the blissful Lord.”¹³

Gandhi’s mother lived the life of a true and devout Vaishnava and as Joseph J. Doke has observed : “If any one nearby was in need, Brahmin or Sudra, she was one to render help as soon as possible. Every morning the old gateway was besieged by twenty or thirty poverty stricken people, who came to receive the alms or the cup of whey which was never refused, just as though the house were a mediaeval convent and she an Indian Saint Elizabeth.”¹⁴

This Vaishnavic family influence of self-sacrifice, self-surrender, identification with God’s creation and renunciation of worldly possessions, on Gandhi, had its sociological manifestation in form of compassion for the suffering humanity, and egalitarian philosophy.

Gandhi’s family contact with the Jains and the Jain philosophy of non-violence accentuated his ethical outlook in favour of communitarianism. Jainism as a religious faith arose as an offshoot of Hinduism, as an attempt at reforming Hinduism in order to make it less violent and more humane, compassionate, and a selfless faith, infusing a greater sense of sociability into the doctrine. The Jain philosophy no doubt is primarily a philosophy of non-injury to living beings and a philosophy

of non-violence; but positively speaking it is a religion that preaches compassion not only for man but for all living beings.

Gandhi's sense of Ahimsa or non-violence stimulated by his early contact with the Jaina faith traversed far beyond the accepted Jaina faith of non-inflictment of physical injury on the living beings. Ahimsa or non-violence, when passed through the prism of Gandhian faith, assumed a more positive form—the form of love for one's fellow beings. Understood in the social setting, Gandhi took cognisance not only of the physical violence inflicted by one individual or one living being over another, but also of the violence perpetrated by the socio-economic system against individuals or against certain social groups. Accordingly the system of violence that was the outcome of an exploiting and unjust socio-economic system in which millions suffer under the crushing heels of a handful of privileged people engaged Gandhi's attention. Since the termination of such exploitation and end of such violence implied creation of a just socio-economic order grounded on egalitarian principle, Gandhi with his compassion for living beings and aesthetic rejection of violent principles became an advocate of socialism. As it has been contended : "Gandhiji being essentially a social thinker is not so much concerned with Ahimsa as mere abstinence from physical injury done to living beings; he is more concerned with the vast amount of human suffering or harm inflicted by economic, social and political exploitation and to him therefore ahimsa mainly means treating every human being not as a means to the benefit or pleasure of others but always as an end in itself."¹⁵

The Right Conduct of Jainism which is the most important part of the ethical discipline of Jainism reclines heavily on the five great vows (the Pancha Mahamantra) of non-injury (Ahimsa), Truthfulness (Satya), non-stealing (Asteya), celibacy (brahmacharya) and renunciation (aparigraha). These five great vows stand at the core of the eleven principles of Gandhi's philosophy of life and the eleven vows he prescribed for the Ashramites. They also constitute the cornerstones of Gandhi's social philosophy and socialist outlook. Thus Gandhi's family tradition of Vaishnavism reinforced by Jaina contact and Jaina Philosophy made him more radically oriented towards socialism.

(b) Influence of the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads

The Vaishnavic and Jaina influences that furnished socialistic tinge to Gandhi's social philosophy were derived comparatively unconsciously and in form of ancestral legacy or endowments of family tradition and culture, but never as a result of any conscious effort, any intellectual conviction, or any spiritual confirmation of the sociological values contained in those religious doctrines. On the other hand the indebtedness of Gandhi's socialist thought to the Bhagavad Gita was more due to his conscious preference for the basic social values enshrined therein.

Gandhi was a devout Hindu and some times it is said that "he is a Buddhist". A newspaper once described him as "a Christian Mohammedan".¹⁶ Even some believed him to be a theosophist. But as Joseph J. Doke posed the issue: "I question whether any system of religion can absolutely hold him. His views are too closely allied to Christianity to be entirely Hindu and too deeply saturated with Hinduism to be called Christian while his sympathies are so wide and so catholic that one would imagine he has reached a point where the formula of sects are meaningless."¹⁷ His religious views were therefore too broad and too deep to be circumscribed within the boundary of any particular faith. He drew his spiritual sustenance from all these faiths and religions. However his initial initiation to religions was through the Bhagavad Gita.

Gandhi's initiation to the Bhagavad Gita was through the West. While in London, through the promptings of two theosophist brothers, Gandhi was introduced to the Gita as translated from the original by Sir Edwin Arnold. Although he felt ashamed that till this prompting, he had no idea of the Gita, yet when he read it, it cast a spell on him. Particularly verses 62 and 63 of Chapter II of the Gita cast a lasting influence on his mind and heart. Recalling its effect on him, Gandhi has written in his autobiography: "The verses in the Second Chapter . . . made a deep impression on my mind, and they still ring in my ears. The book struck me as one of priceless worth. The impression has ever since been growing on with the result that I regard it to-day as the book par excellence for the knowledge of truth."¹⁸

Throughout his life, the Gita remained the source of his pleasure and joy, solace and strength, and the reference book for resolving all knotty problems both in private and public life. Gandhi speaking to the students of the Kashi Viswavidyalaya said : "To-day the Gita is not only my Bible, or my Koran; it is more than that—it is my mother . . . she has never changed, she has never failed me. When I am in difficulty or distress, I seek refuge in her bosom."¹⁹ Later on, Gandhi said that the Gita had been his Kamadhenu, "my guide, my open sesame on hundreds of moments of doubt and difficulty. I cannot recall a single occasion when it has failed me."²⁰ But the most pertinent question is, what was the message of the Gita for Gandhi and how did it influence his social philosophy and socialist thought ?

As is evident from verses 6 to 12 of Chapter VII, the essence of the Gita appears to be the lofty idea that the entire universe is pervaded by God and all the forces of nature, the animate and the inanimate objects, are simply manifestations of the Divine Self. They owe their origin to God and God runs through everything and every being, the entire cosmos, as the string that keeps together beads of pearl. He is the source and sustainer of all life and every thing visible and invisible. In the language of Srikrishna as interpreted by Edwin Arnold :

"I make and I unmake this Universe :
Than me there is no other Master, Prince !
No other Maker ! All these hang on me
As hangs a row of pearls upon its string.
I am the fresh taste of the water; I
The silver of the moon, the gold o' the sun,
The word of worship in the Vedas, the thrill
That passeth in the ether, and the strength
Of man's shed seed. I am the good sweet smell
Of the moistened earth, I am the fire's red light,
The vital air moving in all which moves,
The holiness of hallowed souls, the root
Undying, whence hath sprung whatever is;
The wisdom of the wise, the intellect
Of the informed, the greatness of the great.
The splendour of the splendid."²¹

Since God is the source and sustainer of the universe and

all beings and things in it, each individual and every visible and invisible object has its significance only in the context of the Divine Self. As the spark can be understood only in the context of fire, all animate and inanimate beings can be understood only in relation to the Divine Self and man is no exception to this general rule governing the cosmos. Man's real growth, development and fulfilment lies in his consciousness of this immutable law governing the cosmos, in cognising oneself as a part of the Divine scheme and in promoting and fulfilling the Divine purpose.

The question may naturally arise, what is the Divine scheme and what constitutes the Divine purpose that each individual shall fulfil and promote ? As S. Radhakrishnan has observed : "God's purpose for the world or the cosmic destiny for man is the realisation of the immortal aspiration through the mortal frame, the achievement of the Divine life in and through the physical frame and intellectual consciousness."²² The purpose behind the creation is therefore attainment of "Divine life" by the created beings. Yet how can the created beings attain 'Divine life' ? They have the potentiality to attain such Divine life because the creation has not only been fashioned by God, it has been shaped in His own image. The created beings by virtue of being mere fragments of the Divine Self have also been endowed with Divine Spark. As S. Radhakrishnan has further observed : "The individual self is a portion of the Lord a real not an imaginary form of the Supreme, a limited manifestation of God."²³

But in this mundane world the created beings and particularly the human beings, engrossed in worldly lust, desires and passions, engulfed in sensual pleasures, and tossed by the dictates of the individual ego forget their real mission and miss the Divine life. Hence although they have been endowed with the potentiality to attain Divine life, they cannot attain such destination unless they make conscious efforts. Gita provides the requisite aid for making the conscious effort for attaining the Divine Self. As Bhagavan Satyasai Baba has observed : "The Gita is as a boat, which takes man across from the self imposed state of bondage to the Freedom which is his nature. He is taken from darkness to light, from lustrelessness to splendour."²⁴

Thus the Gita provides the apparatus for reaching the

destination of Divine life. But what is more significant, the Gita is not only a boat for reaching the destination of Divine life; the boat has a boat-man in the person of Lord Srikrishna who teaches the passenger who undertakes the voyage to the destination of Divine life, the technique of handling it. He prescribes the formula for obtaining a release from the bondage of lust and passions that obscure the vision and distort the end in view. But what is the nature of the formula and what is its content? Speaking about the role of the Gita, S. Radhakrishnan says: "For it (the Gita) the State of spiritual freedom consists in the transformation of the whole nature into the immortal and the power of the Divine. Equivalence with God . . . is emphasised. The freed soul is inspired by Divine knowledge and moved by the Divine will. He acquires the mode of being of God. His purified nature is assimilated into the Divine substance."²⁵

Thus for the sake of attainment of Divine life that is the ultimate objective of human beings, transformation of the nature of man, its purification and assimilation into the Divine substance and attainment of a state of equivalence with God must be treated as conditions precedent. But the question that naturally crops up is the nature of the transformation to be undergone so that assimilation with Divine substance and equivalence with God shall be reached. Since individual passion, greed, desire for personal enjoyments and glorification of the ego obscure the vision for the attainment of Divine life and distort the objective of attainment of a state equivalence with Divine, liberation from the bondage of individual passion and greed, sublimation of the self and transfiguration of the ego are very much essential. Hence as S. Radhakrishnan has observed: "We must rise above our ego and grow into the Supreme-self."²⁶

But the ego can be transcended neither by obtaining a release from activities nor from the mundane or the bodily existence. "It is attained not by destroying but by transfiguring the tension of human life."²⁷ The transfiguration of human life therefore implies transcendence of the ego, broadening out of one's personality or "progressive self enlargement".

Thus for the attainment of Divine Self that is the highest ambition of man and the ultimate objective of the creation, the

*individual must be liberated from the clutches of the ego. But the liberation according to the Gita consists in the transcendence of self, compassion for the whole world and service to the entire creation. Hence as S. Radhakrishnan has observed : "The liberated souls take upon themselves the burden of the redemption of the whole world. Anchored in the timeless foundation of our spiritual existence, the freed soul, the eternal individual, works for the 'jivalok'. While possessing individuality of body, life and mind, he yet retains the universality of spirit.'"*²⁸

In sum, according to S. Radhakrishnan the message of the Gita is one of attainment of Divinity in human life and equivalence with God by way of transcendence of the ego, sublimation of the self and service of the whole world.

Speaking about the destiny and the destination of man the purpose of the creation and the message of the Gita, Gandhi has said : "Man is not at peace with himself till he has become like Unto God. The endeavour to reach this state is the supreme, the only ambition worth having. And this is self-realisation. This self-realisation is the subject of the Gita as it is of all scriptures."²⁹

Thus becoming "like Unto God" or attainment of "self-realisation" is the end of human life and the Gita preaches the principles of self-realisation. But if "self-realisation" is the message of the Gita the ideal so preached is not realisable through cultivation of a sense of narrow self-consciousness and egoism, promotion of one's interests at the expense of others, or enrichment of one's personality in complete disregard of the greater interest of the community. Since the individual-self as conceived in the Gita is a fragment of the Supreme-Self, the petty-self of the individual can be realised only in the context of realisation of the existence of the Supreme Self in one's own life. This becomes more so if "self-realisation" consists in becoming "like Unto God" as understood by Gandhi. But the Supreme Self is indistinguishable from its creation or the cosmos it pervades. Accordingly realisation of the Supreme Self presupposes realisation in one's life the existence of manifold manifestations of the Supreme Self. Self-realisation of the individual understood in its proper perspective is therefore inconceivable through the consciousness of the

individual as an isolated atom; instead the petty-self can aspire to attain a state of self-realisation by becoming conscious of its origin as a fragment of the Supreme Self, its relationship with other selves that emanate from the same source, the purpose behind such origin and the ideal it should cherish. Hence the message of self-realisation preached in the Gita implies complete identification with the Supreme Self and the entire cosmos, that is the manifestation of the Supreme Self, the Divine will and the Divine purpose.

Interpreted in the Greenivian terms, the individual self-realisation, as conceived in the Gita is to be construed in the context of universal self-realisation. The individual should not only be conscious of his own self-realisation; he should be equally conscious of the self-realisation of all other selves that are mere fragments of the Universal Self. He should conceive of his self-realisation only in the context of self-realisation of millions of individual selves.

Besides, if "self realisation" is realisable through an attempt to "become like Unto God", this God-hood can be attained by cultivating a spirit of broad-heartedness magnanimity and concern for others like God and developing a sense of fraternity with God's creation if not assuming its Paternity. As Bhagavan Sri Satyasai Baba has observed : "When one has attained the state of realising the Divinity in every Being, when every instrument of knowledge brings the Experience of that Divinity, when, It alone is seen, heard and tasted, smelt, and touched, man becomes undoubtedly a part of the Body of God, and lives in Him and with Him."³⁰

Hence in verse 35 of Chapter IV of the Gita, a man of true self-knowledge or one who has attained the state of self-realisation has been characterised as one who sees every thing as located in one's self and located in God. As Bal Gangadhar Tilak understood it, the burden of emphasis of the verse is on "knowledge of the identity of the Atman with all created beings, that is to seeing the entire creation embodied in oneself and seeing oneself embodied in the entire creation. . . . As he the Atman (self) and the Bhagavan (Blessed Lord) are fundamentally uniform, the entire creation is comprehended in the Atman, that is ultimately also naturally, in the Bhagavan or the Blessed Lord, and the three fold distinction between, the

Atman (one self) the rest of the creation and the Blessed Lord naturally disappears.”³¹

The same philosophy is also contained in verses 29, 30, 31 and 32 of Chapter VI of the Gita that read :

Sarvabhūtastham atmanāṁ
sarvabhūtāni cā tmani
īkṣate yogayuktātmā
Sarvatra samadarsanah ... V. 29

Yo mām paśyati sarvatra
sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati
tasyāhaṁ no pranaśyāmi
sa ca me na pranaśyati ... V. 30

Sarvabhūtasthitam Yo mām
bhajaty ekatvam āsthitaḥ
Sarvathā vartamano 'pi
Sa yogī mayi vartate ... V. 31

ātmaupamyena sarvatra
samaṁ paśyati yo 'rjuna
sukhaṁ vā yadi vā duḥkhaṁ
sa yogī paramo mataḥ ... V. 32

In this chapter while Yoga has been elevated to an Olympic height and is considered superior to Tapas, Gyana and Karma and Lord Sri Krishna's injunction to Arjuna is to become a yogin, the yogin has been described as one who sees himself in all beings and all beings in himself. Besides, a perfect yogin has been depicted as one “who sees Me every where and sees all in Me”, “Worships Me abiding in all beings” and “judges pleasure or pain every where by the same standard, as he applies to himself”.³² Only such a yogin qualifies himself for eternal Divine bliss. As says Lord Sri Krishna in the Gita, “I am not lost to him nor is he lost to Me.”³³

Thus the Gita that holds attainment of Divine life, Divine existence, “self realisation” and “become like Unto God” as the highest objectives of human life and the entire universe, not only preaches identification with the Supreme Self but also the Divine scheme and the entire creation. Besides, it also prescribes the strategy for forging such identification. The strategy is a two-edged tool that cuts both ways. On the one hand, it prescribes as indicated earlier in this

section, exorcising of the demons that obstruct attainment of such identification – the demons of delusion, egoism, selfishness and self-aggrandisement and on the other it prescribes, one's compassion for all, concern for the entire creation and performance of self-less action that shall promote the welfare of all. Hence verse 25 of Chapter V and verses 4 and 13 of Chapter XII harp on compassion for all and actions directed at the welfare of all.

In verse 25 of Chapter V the essential characteristic of a holy man who qualifies himself for the attainment of Brahma Nirvana or the beatitude of God has been depicted among other things as the quality of love and compassion for all and rejoicing in doing the good of all. As S. Radhakrishnan has interpreted it, such a holy man is he "who sees all existence in the Supreme, sees the Divine even in the fallen and the criminal, and goes out to them in deep love and sympathy".³⁴ In verse 4 of Chapter XII people rejoicing in the welfare of all creatures, are said to attain the Supreme Self or God-hood and in verse 13 of the same Chapter, a true devotee of God is characterised as one who has no ill-will towards any being and who is friendly and compassionate to all. Emphasising on this message of compassion for all and performance of action directed at the welfare of all as preached in the Gita, S. Radhakrishnan has observed : "The liberated souls take upon themselves the burden of the redemption of the whole world. Anchored in the timeless foundation of our spiritual existence the freed soul, the eternal individual works for the jivalok; while possessing individuality of body life and mind he yet retains the universality of spirit."³⁵ Thus the Gita preaches the message of sublimation of the self and elevation to an immeasurable height the values of dedication to the cause of welfare of the creation.

The "Principal subject matter of the Gita" according to Bal Gangadhar Tilak is "the exposition of the Karma Yoga".³⁶ Chapters 3 and 4 of the Gita deal elaborately with Karmayoga. Karma or engagement in action is considered as the supreme need of life. Life is considered inconceivable without action and it is conceived of being sustained only by action. By the very nature of things one can not remain actionless even for a moment. Even saints and Sannyasis are not exempted from

the obligation of action. Even God, who is the source of this universe, from whom the entire creation proceeds, is not free from such obligation. As Lord Sri Krishna indicates to Arjuna in verse 22 of Chapter III of Gita :

“Look on me,
Thou Son of Pritha ! in the three wide worlds
I am not bound to any toil, no height
Awaits to scale, no gift remains to gain,
Yct I act here !”³⁷

But although the Bhagavad Gita is an injunction for ceaseless action, it is a plea for action of a certain variety, a type of action that helps self-realisation. Since self-realisation consists in identification of one's self with the Divine Self and this creation, and rendering service to the Divine Self and the whole creation, having in view the welfare of all, the action that is enjoined by the Gita is, action without expecting anything in return or renunciation of the fruits of action. As is evident from verses 9, 12 and 13 of Chapter III, although action must be performed by everybody and human nature propels everybody to engage himself in action, these actions must be performed with a spirit of detachment for the fruits thereof. Particularly in verse 9 it is made amply clear that actions performed without a spirit of sacrifice and service to others becomes the source of bondage. As S. Radhakrishnan has interpreted it : “All work is to be done in a spirit of sacrifice, for the sake of the Divine . . . The Gita asks us to do such action without entertaining any hope of reward. In such cases the inevitable action has no binding power. Sacrifice itself is interpreted in a larger sense. We have to sacrifice the lower mind to the higher. The religious duty towards the Vedic gods here becomes service of creation in the name of the Supreme.”³⁸

Hence it is enjoined by the Gita that action must be performed with a spirit of detachment for the fruits thereof and with a spirit of service for the community. From verses 12 and 13 of Chapter III it is evident that those who enjoy the fruits of action without sacrifice or service to the community or the Divine are thieves, commit violence against the Divine and their acts become action tainted in sin. Hence the emphasis of the Gita is on action for the service of God or for the welfare of

His creation, but not action with the ultimate objective of self-aggrandisement.

Thus the Gita, that had so much overwhelmed Gandhi, became his open sesame and his Kamadhenu, and held the key to all his riddles, preaches a communitarian philosophy or a philosophy of annihilation of the self on the altar of the community, complete identification with the community and complete surrender of one's interests and welfare for the welfare of the community. Hence it is no wonder that if Gita conveyed Gandhi, in respect of the metaphysical and supra-mundane realm, the message of self-realisation, it conveyed to him too that self-realisation that is the highest objective of human life consists in identification with the whole universe, rendering service to all, promoting the welfare of all and sacrificing the fruits of one's labour or renunciation for the service of God and the good of the community. Under its impact Gandhi felt that the human body that is likened to a prison may be converted into a temple of God by "Desireless action, by renouncing the fruits of action"³⁹; and renunciation of fruits of one's action constitutes the gateway to one's self-realisation and fulfilment of the Divine purpose. As he said, "The object of the Gita appears to me to be that of showing the most excellent way to attain self-realisation."⁴⁰ But what is the excellent way? "That matchless remedy is renunciation of fruits of action. This is the centre round which the Gita is woven. This renunciation is the central sun round which devotion, knowledge and the rest revolve like planets."⁴¹

But what is more important for Gandhi who functioned in the societal plane, these ideals of renunciation, identification of one's good with the welfare of the community and promotion of the welfare of all, when experimented in private life and social scale lent a communitarian and egalitarian character to his social philosophy. Particularly the message of renunciation as preached by the Gita aided and abetted by his concept of Truth and Non-violence contributed to his egalitarian doctrine.

Since renunciation of fruits of action stands at the centre of the concept of self-realisation as preached by the Gita, Gandhi who interpreted all his sociological formulations in terms of the well accepted formula of Truth and Ahimsa said: "Thinking along these lines, I have felt that in trying to enforce

in one's life the central teachings of the Gita (renunciation of the fruits of action) one is bound to follow Truth and Ahimsa. When there is no desire for fruit, there is no temptation for untruth or Himsa. Take any instance of untruth or violence, and it will be found that at its back was the desire to attain [the cherished end.]⁴²

If a practitioner of renunciation can not but practise truth and non-violence, this practice of truth and non-violence, shall lead as direct corollaries to a non-acquisitive and non-exploitative and thus a non-violent and an egalitarian society. According to Gandhi "the nearest approach to Truth was through love".⁴³ Hence one who practises renunciation for the sake of self-realisation must practise love for the fellow beings and for him, acquisitiveness shall not only be conspicuous by its absence from his character, he will be inspired by positive love for the fellow-beings, and will be ready to sacrifice the self for the sake of the same. The question of exploitation of others and deprivation of other members of the society of their rightful due is therefore irrelevant and out of point. Besides, Gandhi prescribed, "those who would make individual search after truth as God, must go through several vows, as for instance . . the vow of non-violence, of poverty, of non-possession . . . if you would swim on the bosom of the ocean of Truth, you must reduce yourself to a Zero."⁴⁴ Thus passion for renunciation that leads to a flair for truth ultimately leads to love for the fellow beings and non-possession for their welfare. Hence the question of an exploitative and non-egalitarian society is completely ruled out.

Besides as Gandhi said, "I have in all humility felt that perfect renunciation is impossible without perfect observance of Ahimsa in every shape and form."⁴⁵ Thus one who attempts to practise renunciation shall have to renounce Ahimsa too of all kinds and every variety. Ahimsa, according to Gandhi, positively speaking, is inseparable from love and he said, "Ahimsa and love are one and the same thing." Hence if renunciation leads to Ahimsa, the latter must necessarily lead to love and one who aspires to practise renunciation, must practise love for fellowbeings, sharing of one's prosperity with others, and surrender of one's property and privileges for the sake of the community. Practice of Ahimsa shall therefore

automatically pave the way towards the emergence of an egalitarian society.

Further, Gandhi considered exploitation and deprivation of others of their rightful dues as a form of himsa or violence. A practitioner of non-violence or ahimsa according to him cannot aspire to exploit others, enrich himself at the expense of others or fatten oneself at the cost of others. On the contrary as he said, "If we are to be non-violent we must then not wish for anything on this earth which the meanest or the lowest of human beings cannot have." Hence Gandhi banished exploitation of others from the ambit of his non-violent action. If non-violence is practised in personal life, it shall not leave any scope for exploitation, that lies at the root of an inequalitarian society. If it is experimented in the social scale it shall automatically lead to an egalitarian society.

Thus the technique of renunciation that forms the cornerstone of the message of self-realisation as preached by the Gita profoundly influenced Gandhi, and it converted him inch by inch to the doctrine of egalitarianism. Combined with the concept of welfare of all or identification with the good of the universe it contributed to the fashioning of the Gandhian egalitarian philosophy.

Hence Gandhi derived inspiration for his socialist thought from the philosophy of self-realisation, complete identification with the community, renunciation for the sake of the community, and welfare of all preached in the Gita. His idea of Sarvodaya or the "welfare of all", although accepted as its immediate stimulus the *Unto This Last* of Ruskin, yet it derived its primary inspiration from the Gita. The idea of Bread Labour equally derived its inspiration from the Karmayoga or Science of Action of the Gita although Tolstoy's theory of Bread Labour profoundly inspired him in this respect. Gandhi's idea of Trusteeship of the rich can be traced to the philosophy of renunciation of the fruits of one's action for the community as advocated in the Gita. Thus, the Gita proved to be a decisive factor in shaping his social philosophy in the direction of socialism.

Gandhi's interest in the Gita that was stimulated by the theosophist brothers stimulated in turn his interest too for an intensive study of Hinduism and the Upanishads. This study

of Upanishads provided further confirmation to his egalitarian idea that had already been stimulated by the study of the Gita. As Gandhi felt, the Upanishad to which the origin of the Gita can be traced has the seeds of socialism and communism contained in it. As he has said : "Socialism was not born with the discovery of the misuse of capital. As I have contended, socialism, even communism is explicit in the first verse of Ishopanishad."⁴⁶ The first verse of the Ishopanishad reads :

*"Ishabashyamidam Sarvam, Yetkim cha Jagatwam Jagat,
Tena Twaktena Bhunjitha, Ma grudhoa Kashyachid
dhanam"*

According to Gandhi it contains the germs of socialism and communism. Elaborating the verse Gandhi said that the first part of the verse which says that, the entire universe is pervaded by God, and that God is at the root of the universe, preaches the philosophy of equality and fraternity, the very basic principles of socialism. As he said : "Universal brotherhood not only brother-hood of all human beings but of all living beings, I find in this mantra . . . Since He pervades every fibre of my being and of all of you, I derive from it the doctrine of equality of all creatures on earth and it should satisfy the cravings of philosophical communists."⁴⁷

Apart from the philosophy of equality and fraternity that are considered as the cornerstones of socialism, Gandhi also felt that this first verse of the Ishopanishad particularly the second part of the verse, contained the philosophy of non-acquisitiveness, non-exploitation, renunciation of one's possession and service to the community, that are the bedrocks of socialism.

It follows from the first part of the verse according to Gandhi that since God is at the root of the universe, and He pervades everything, none can acquire anything without his knowledge and consent and without it being given over by him. As he said : "If you believe that God pervades everything that He has created you must believe that you can not enjoy anything that is not given by Him."⁴⁸ Besides the second part "Tena Twaktena Bhunjitha" of the verse prescribes renunciation as very condition for enjoyment. Hence as Gandhi has said : "When a man has performed that act of renunciation and dedication, he derives from that act the right of eating, drink-

ing, clothing and housing himself to the extent necessary for his daily life. Therefore take it as you like either in the sense that the enjoyment or use is the reward of renunciation or that the renunciation is the condition of enjoyment.”⁴⁹

Thus this part of the verse rules out according to Gandhi appropriation of anything beyond one's absolute needs. Besides all appropriations must be in direct proportion to the sacrifices or services rendered to the society.

The last portion of the second part of the verse, that “Ma grudhoa Kasyachid dhanam” is an injunction against acquisition of others' property for one's own use. As Gandhi interpreted it, it means, “Do not covet any body's wealth or possession.” Hence the question of living upon any body's sweated labour and expropriation of the labourers of their rightful dues do not arise. As Gandhi has said, “Do not covet any body's possession. The moment you carry out these precepts you become a wise citizen of the world living with peace with all that lives. It satisfies one's highest aspirations on this earth and hereafter.”⁵⁰

Thus according to Gandhi the basic tenets of socialist and even communist philosophy i.e., equality, fraternity, fellowship, non-exploitation and sharing of possessions and privileges are contained in the Upanishad and particularly the first verse of the Ishopanishad. Accordingly Gandhi wrote : “As I read the mantra in the light of the Gita or the Gita in the light of the mantra, I find that the Gita is a commentary on this mantra. It seems to me to satisfy the cravings of the socialist and the communist”⁵¹

Hence the Gita and the Upanishad provided the basic inspiration for Gandhi's socialist thought.

(c) Influence of Buddhism

Apart from the Bhagavad Gita or the “Song Celestial” the Light of Asia of Edwin Arnold also came to Gandhi handy. Speaking about the Light of Asia, Gandhi has written “I read it with even greater interest than I did the Bhagavad Gita. Once I had begun it I could not leave it.”⁵² But what about the message of the “Light of Asia” or of Lord Buddha ?

Lord Buddha preached the philosophy of compassion for human beings. His is a philosophy of universal love. Lord Buddha was interested not only in his own Nirvana but also in

the Nirvana of all. He sought liberation from sorrows and sufferings not only beings but also of all living beings. As is evident from a hymn to Love in Sutta Nipata, the Nirvana that Lord Buddha comprehended, embraced the Nirvana of all creatures "weak or strong", "great and small", "unseen or seen", "dwelling afar or near". "born or awaiting birth".⁵³ Spoken differently his was a philosophy of universal love "an all embracing love for all the universe in all its heights and depths and breadth".⁵⁴ Hence Lord Buddha and Buddhism are concerned with universal love, that transcends selfishness and narrowness in every form. As Lord Buddha is said to have enjoined on human beings: "And thus live and act you must for personal salvation is not every thing: Others are caught in the world's futilities and you must help to liberate them."⁵⁵

Speaking particularly of the *Light of Asia* of Edwin Arnold it may be said that it depicts in a lucid and cogent manner the Buddhist philosophy of universal love and sacrifice, and renunciation for the sake of universal welfare. As Edwin Arnold writes :

"Have good-will to all that lives,
letting unkindness die
And greed and wrath; so that your lives be made
Like soft airs passing by."⁵⁶

Apart from the emphasis on universal love, the emphasis on selfless service as advocated by Buddha and Buddhism is brought out in the words of *Light of Asia*. If happiness or Nirvana is the supreme objective of human life, it can be attained by selfless service. As Edwin Arnold writes :

"And that by how so much the house holder
Purgeth himself of self and helps the world,
By so much happier comes he to the next stage
In so much better beings."⁵⁷

The philosophy of renunciation that inspired the life of Lord Buddha, under whose influence, Prince Sidhartha became the Prince of Renunciation, is also strikingly brought out in the writings of Edwin Arnold. Not only it is a question of conquering the "love of self and lust of life" and tearing away of "deep-rooted passion", it is also a question of :

“Give freely and receive but take from none

By greed, or force, or fraud, what is his own.”⁵⁸

Arnold's *Light of Asia* not only preaches the spirit of renunciation of Lord Buddha; it also preaches his philosophy of non-exploitation because, Lord Buddha's compassion for all living beings not only led him to be an advocate of non-injury or “Kill not”, it also implies non-deprivation of anybody of his rightful dues. As Lord Buddha said : “Right acts are to abstain from taking life, from stealing.”⁵⁹ This message of Lord Buddha depicted through the poetic faculty of Edwin Arnold conquered the heart of Gandhi. The philosophy of universal love, non-injury to living beings, sacrifice and renunciation for the sake of promoting the welfare of the universe and the principle of non-stealing as preached by Lord Buddha and driven home to him through the *Light of Asia* of Edwin Arnold had such deeper appeal for Gandhi that while speaking in the Y.M.C.A. hall at Colombo on November 15, 1927 he elevated to an exalted height the principle of renunciation and self-sacrifice practised by Lord Buddha for the sake of deliverance of living beings from the world of sin and unhappiness and for bringing happiness to all beings in the universe. As he said : “Buddha renounced every worldly happiness because he wanted to share with the whole world his happiness which was to be had by men who sacrificed and suffered in search for truth.”⁶⁰

The same day speaking in reply to Buddhists' address at Colombo, he said : “Great as Buddha's contribution to humanity was in restoring God to His eternal place, in my humble opinion greater still was his contribution to humanity in his exacting regard for all life, be it ever so low.”⁶¹

This Buddhist compassion for suffering humanity, love for the entire universe, sacrifice and renunciation for the sake of the welfare of the entire creation and concern for the liberation of all from suffering and unhappiness drove home to Gandhi the passion of serving the cause of humanity, a sense of sacrifice and renunciation for bettering their lot and a desire for service instead of exploitation. This passion and compassion stimulated his sense of non-exploitation and egalitarianism and prepared the foundation of his philosophy of Sarvodaya or the welfare of all.

Besides, one of the major contributions of Lord Buddha to the realm of thought was his emphasis on purity of means. The Eightfold Path for the attainment of Nirvana harps on purity of means such as "right action", "right aspiration", "right living", "right effort" etc. As Edwin Arnold has elaborated them in his *Light of Asia* :

"That which you sow, ye reap.

If he shall labour rightly, rooting these,

(Weed and poison stuff)

And planting wholesome seedlings where they grew,

And rich the harvest due."⁶²

This emphasis on right means appealed to Gandhi most and as he said : "If there was any teacher in the world who insisted upon the inexorable law of cause and effect it was Gautama."⁶³ The Gandhian emphasis on indissoluble relationship between pure means and noble end is partly derived from the Buddhist influence and that also determined Gandhian emphasis on purity of means or adoption of non-violent means for the attainment of socialism.

The Buddhism determined not only the nature of Gandhian socialism i.e., Sarvodaya, but also the nature of the technique for the attainment of the same i.e., the non-violent technique.

(d) Influence of Christianity

The religious ferment that was aroused in Gandhi by the theosophist brothers, not only attracted him to Gita, the Upanishads and Buddhism; he was drawn equally forcibly towards Christianity. If he was introduced to Gita and Buddhism by the theosophist brothers, he was drawn towards Christianity as a result of the promptings he obtained from a vegetarian Christian friend from Manchester.⁶⁴ Of course he looked with scepticism at many Christian beliefs such as considering Jesus as "the only incarnate son of God" or treating "Christianity as a perfect religion or the greatest of all religions", or that salvation is impossible unless one embraces Christianity;⁶⁵ yet he was deeply influenced by the Bible and particularly the New Testament and as he says "the Sermon on the Mount, went straight to my heart".

Although Gandhi did not identify himself with orthodox Christianity, the message of the Bible, the New Testament and

the Sermon on the Mount had shaken the vital fibre in him. As E. Stanley Jones understood Gandhi : "Mahatma Gandhi was a Hindu – a deeply Christianised Hindu, more Christianised than most Christians . . ." ⁶⁶ Kingsley Martin, Editor of the *New Statesman* and the *Nation* wrote, "I regard Gandhi as probably being of all modern leaders the most faithful interpreter of the philosophy of the Gospels." ⁶⁷ Frederik B. Fisher himself a devout Christian and an evangelist, has written : "Gandhi is a Hindu. He says so. All Indians know it. Yet he lives the Sermon on the Mount. Is he also a Christian ?" ⁶⁸ "Thus it is amply proved that Gandhi lived the life of a devout Christian. But what are the basic beliefs of the Gospel and the Christian faith that made him practise Christianity in life although he did not embrace Christianity in the sectarian sense of the term ?

Christianity like all other major faiths is primarily founded on compassion for living beings and sacrifice and renunciation for the sake of redeeming the sufferings of humanity. Jesus' life is itself a message. He embraced crucifixion for his effort in redeeming the fallen and the down-trodden. His message of universal love and renunciation for the sake of bringing relief to one's neighbour is the highest human ideal whose pursuit delivers one according to him, real and eternal bliss. It is not by greed, by accumulation of wealth said Jesus that the real happiness can be attained; rather it is by renunciation, by charity, by sharing one's possessions with neighbours and fellow beings that real happiness can be enjoyed. Emphasising on universal love, Jesus said: "Love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this that a man should lay down his life for his friends This is my commandment to you love one another." ⁶⁹

As said Jesus : "Be on your guard against greed of every kind for even when a man has more than enough, his wealth does not give him life." ⁷⁰ He further pointed out, "You clean the outside of cup and plate; but inside you there is nothing but greed and wickedness. You fool ! Did not he who made the outside made the inside too ? But let what is in the cup be given in charity and all is clean." ⁷¹ He further advised : "Sell everything you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven . . . How hard it is for the wealthy to

enter the kingdom of God ! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.”⁷²

Thus Jesus was primarily concerned with the creation of a better world, where love, fellowship, and fraternity shall prevail. The basis of fellowship is sharing wealth with one's fellow beings and renunciation for the sake of promotion of this idea of fellowship and fraternity. As Gandhi wrote about Jesus : “He was certainly the highest example of one who wished to give everything asking nothing in return and not caring what creed might happen to be professed by the recipient.”⁷³ Speaking about the values and virtues Jesus stood for, Gandhi wrote, it is “the virtue of loving one's neighbour as oneself and of doing good and charitable work among one's fellowmen”.⁷⁴

This spirit of love for and service to all, and non-acquisitiveness and renunciation preached by Jesus, must have helped Gandhi to properly understand, equality, fraternity and fellowship, the basic ideas underlying socialist philosophy. Besides Jesus' emphasis that “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruits”,⁷⁵ must have helped Gandhi to establish an interminable bond between end and means from which his concept of non-violent technique and non-violent socialism emerged. Thus Gandhi's social philosophy and particularly his socialist thought that derived deep inspiration from the philosophy contained in the Gita, the Upanishads and Buddhism also derived its sustenance from Christianity.

As Joseph J. Doke, Gandhi's first biographer has written “Naturally his imagination is profoundly stirred by the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ and the idea of self-renunciation pictured there as well as in the Bhagavad Gita and the Light of Asia win his complete assent. Self-mastery, self-denial and self-surrender, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, are in his conception of life, stepping-stones to the ultimate goal of all—the goal of Buddha, the goal as he interprets it, of John the Evangelist—absolute absorption of redeemed Man in God.”⁷⁶ Under the influence of such spiritual and religious heritage, Gandhi grasped the lofty ideals of universal love, universal welfare, non-acquisitiveness, renunciation and sharing of one's wealth with others, that form the cornerstones of his social philosophy and socia-

list thought. Hence the primary inspiration of Gandhian socialism is not only ethical but also deeply religious.

PERSONAL INFLUENCES

Although Gandhi's plea for an egalitarian society was primarily a product of the deep sense of religiosity developed in him by his Vaishnavite family culture, Jain contact and study of the Gita, the Upanishad, the Bible and the Light of Asia, this profound religiosity drove him closer to some Utopians in the realm of thought whose life and philosophy provided confirmation, a sense of direction, and a shape, to his socialist convictions. Of course Gandhi drew avidly from the indigenous sources i.e., from the cultural heritage of the Gita, the Upanishad, Buddhism and Jainism. Of course by his conduct, taste and temperament, habits and manner of living, he proved himself, unlike most of his contemporaries and compatriots, a child of the soil and a staunch orientalist; yet Gandhi was a great internationalist not only in the sense of contributing to the idea of international community and international understanding, but also by way of getting his thoughts and ideas enriched by the philosophy of life and messages of scholars from three countries and three continents such as Tolstoy the Russian scholar, Ruskin the British writer, and Thoreau the American philosopher. Gandhi artistically welded together the egalitarian messages of Vaishnavism, Jainism, the Gita, the Upanishad, Christianity and Buddhism with the egalitarian philosophy of Ruskin, Tolstoy and Thoreau, and formulated his concept of non-violent socialism.

Gandhi's social philosophy was so profoundly influenced by the life and philosophy of Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau that his "Hind Swaraj or India's Home Rule" that forms his primary political, social and economic testament and the preliminary blue-print of his Swaraj or socio-economic structure of the future, was modelled on the lines indicated by these thinkers. In his Preface to the Indian Home Rule written on March 20, 1910 Gandhi wrote : "While the views expressed in Hind Swaraj are held by me, I have but endeavoured humbly to follow Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau and other writers besides the masters of Indian Philosophy. Tolstoy has been one of my

teachers for a number of years. Those who want to see a corroboration of the views submitted in the following chapters will find it in the words of the above named masters.’’⁷⁷

But these acknowledged masters of Gandhi from three different countries had one common characteristic that bound them together and made them belong to a single fraternity. It was their common obsession with the individualistic, laissez-faire, and exploiting society that was at the root of misery, destitution and deprivation of millions. They were tortured by the sight of division of the society into two unequal parts of the haves and the have-nots, the privileged and the under-privileged and the rich and the poor, with a life of luxury for some at the expense of the misery of millions. All of them advocated re-organisation of the existing society, based on privilege and exploitation, in favour of a more tolerable and more egalitarian social order. Their approach to the problem was identical, of compassion on the part of the haves for the have-nots, an attitude of love for their suffering brethren, that shall culminate in the renunciation of one's privileges, and acceptance of a philosophy and programme of voluntary poverty so as to remove the poverty of millions. All of them made Bread Labour their Polestar and Trusteeship of the rich, their Mariner's compass. Hence when Gandhi's social philosophy came under the impact of the philosophy of Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau, it assumed further socialistic turn.

(a) Influence of Tolstoy

It is evident from Gandhi's autobiography that he became acquainted with some of the ideas of Tolstoy while he was in London as a student. He visited the great Paris exhibition and Tolstoy's disparagement of the Eiffel Tower the "toy of the Exhibition" appealed to him most. As Gandhi writes, "I remember that Tolstoy was the chief among those who disparaged, it (the Eiffel Tower). He said that the Eiffel Tower was a monument of man's folly, not of his wisdom. Tobacco, he argued, was the worst of all intoxicants inasmuch as a man addicted to it was tempted to commit crimes which a drunkard never dares to do; liquor made a man mad, but tobacco clouded his intellect and made him build castles in the air. The Eiffel Tower was one of the creations of a man under such

influence.”⁷⁸

Subsequently while in South Africa, Gandhi read Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*. Speaking about its impact on him Gandhi writes : “Tolstoy's *Kingdom of God Is Within You* overwhelmed me. It left an abiding impression on me.”⁷⁹ Subsequently he read Tolstoy's *The Gospel in Brief, What to Do* and other writings. Gandhi was so much overwhelmed by the philosophy of Tolstoy that he considered the latter as his mentor and opened a period of pen-friendship with him that continued almost till Tolstoy breathed his last. He acknowledged his indebtedness to Tolstoy by considering himself “a humble follower of that teacher whom I have long looked upon as one of my guides”.⁸⁰ From the other side Tolstoy exhibited equal interest in this ardent follower of his. When Gandhi was engaged in ‘atya-graha in Transvaal he had the blessings of Tolstoy who said : “May God help all our dear brothers and co-workers in Transvaal” and “I give my fraternal greetings.”⁸¹ When Gandhi sent a copy of his *Hind Swaraj* or *India's Home Rule* to Tolstoy claiming to be latter's “devoted follower”, Tolstoy replied : “I have read your book with great interest because I think the question you have therein dealt with is important not only for Indians but for the whole man-kind.”⁸² Tolstoy wrote to V. Chertkov on 22nd April, 1910 regarding Gandhi : “He is very close to us. He has read my writings.”⁸³

Gandhi was influenced both by the life and philosophy of Tolstoy. A born aristocrat, Tolstoy had renounced the happy and go-lucky life addicted to luxury, lived the life of a poor peasant, swept and cleaned his own room, his clothes and shoes, worked with peasants in his own estate Yasnaya Polyana, ploughed and furrowed the land, worked for peasant families who were running short of labour, and sometimes performed all the farm operations for a poor widow, who could hardly afford to engage hired labourers. He gave up hunting, drinking and eating meat, and abandoned even tobacco and tea. He travelled third class and sometimes, walked the distance from Moscow to Yasnaya Polyana, his estate, at a distance of about 224 kilometres. He established schools for peasants' children and was the happiest in the company of the peasants. This life of renunciation and dedication to the service of the poor and the oppressed had such a great appeal for Gandhi that he

refashioned his life accordingly. He renounced his property and embraced voluntary poverty, clothed himself like a poor peasant, made ample use of his limbs to earn his bread and travelled in third class railway compartments after he opted for a life of renunciation. Hence as Pyarelal has very appropriately observed : "It was not Tolstoy's writings alone, but the example of his life, his passion for truth and ceaseless striving after perfection that enthroned him in Gandhi's hearts In him he found a kindred spirit, a single minded seeker after truth, an aristocrat turned peasant and shoemaker in pursuit of the meaning of life who dedicated his wealth and talent and genius to the service of humanity while he himself strove to the live by his body labour."⁸⁴

Apart from Tolstoy's life, his social philosophy had shaken Gandhi's ethical and moral fibre. Tolstoy like so many socialists and communists had believed that the privileges of a few were inversely related to the sufferings of many and the luxuries and ostentatious living of the rich and the wealthy were possible because of the deprivation and destitution of the multitude. If acts of terrorism and violence were being committed during his time against the privileged and the propertied class, Tolstoy laid the blame squarely on the shoulder of such class and considered it the villain of the piece. He felt ashamed of his own privileged position and comfortable existence because as he realised, that was being enjoyed at the expense of many. His sensitive soul cried out : "It is a crime committed not once but constantly. I with my luxury not only tolerate but share in it."⁸⁵

In 1894 writing on the Russian famine he gave vent to identical feeling. "Longer I live, nearer I approach death, the more convinced I am that we are utterly wrong to live in wealth."⁸⁶ In his *I Can Not be Silent* he wrote : "I cannot but feel that there is an indubitable interdependence between my spacious room, my dinner, my clothing, my leisure and the terrible crimes committed to get rid of those who would like to take from me what I have."⁸⁷

Tolstoy not only denounced the then prevailing system of social and economic dichotomy i.e. prosperity on the one hand and poverty on the other; he was not only critical of the privileged position that he was enjoying; he even condemned

his parasitical position. In his *A Confession* he said : "I must not live the life of a parasite, but must live a real life."⁸⁸ Hence Tolstoy posed before the privileged class, "Are you really as landowner or capitalist obliged to base your whole life on the oppression of the people, ... as a government official, are you really forced to take by violence from the poor the money earned by the sweat of their brow to avail yourself of it or hand it over to rich men."⁸⁹ He realised that such a state of affairs, was palpably unjust and the sooner an end is put to it the better for the whole universe. Accordingly he said . . . "the existing organisation of life has outlived its time and must inevitably be reconstructed on new principles."⁹⁰

Tolstoy, a deeply spiritual soul, understood Christianity not in any conservative sense of performance of formal religious rites or service in the Church but in terms of considering God as the source and sustainer, the architect and the caretaker of the whole universe, the supreme objective of each man being realisation of this Divine presence and making oneself an instrument for the attainment of the Kingdom of God on Earth. As he said in the *Kingdom of God is Within You* : "The sole meaning of human life lies in serving the world by promoting the establishment of the Kingdom of God."⁹¹

But the question may naturally arise, how can establishment of this Kingdom of God be promoted ? Tolstoy was as much practical and pragmatic as theological he was in his outlook. Instead of shifting the blame to God Himself for everything irrational and unscientific in the present socio-economic system, and thereby suggesting fatalism and dependence on God for removal of such socio-economic ills, he emphasised on conscious human endeavour. The Kingdom of God can be attained not by outward show or any exhibition of religiosity but by conscious and earnest human effort, by transformation of one's own life and attuning one's life to fulfilment of the Divine will. In order to do the same, Tolstoy administered the advice : . . . "You should be so imbued with the need of loving your fellows and a still stronger need of being loved by them that you see clearly that only by recognising the equality of all men and by mutual service, one of another, can the greatest good, that is accessible to man be realised."⁹²

This love of man, this compassion for fellow beings, should

not be expressed in words only; it must be demonstrated in deeds too. If the sufferings of the poor millions is the result of their exploitation by the privileged rich, the rich must demonstrate the sincerity of their love, for their fellow beings, their compassion, by renouncing their own privilege. They must realise that, "every glass of wine every bit of sugar, butter or meat is so much food taken from the people and so much labour added to their task."⁹³ Hence he said : "I came to this simple and natural conclusion that, if I pitied that worn out horse which I was riding, the first thing I ought to do, if I really was sorry for it was to get off and walk."⁹⁴

Apart from renunciation as a device for attaining the Kingdom of God on this earth, Tolstoy believed in the efficacy of bodily or manual labour for earning one's bread. The leisured life of his own privileged class was rated at a discount by him, whereas he attached premium to the life of labour. The life of leisure was so distasteful and degrading to him that he said : "It came about that the life of our circle, the rich and learned not merely became distasteful to me, but lost all meaning in my eyes. All our actions, discussions, science and art, presented itself to me in a new light. I understood that it is all merely self-indulgence and that to find a meaning in it is impossible, the life of the whole labouring people, the whole mankind who while produce life appeared to me in its true significance. I understood that is life itself and that the meaning given to that life is true."⁹⁵

Accordingly Tolstoy advocated performance of manual labour or physical labour by everybody. Apart from being the only device to earn one's living which also endows life with true meaning and significance, such manual labour he felt is essential for serving the Kingdom of God. To improve the lot of the poor, to forge a bond of communion and identification with them so that the essence of the concept of Kingdom of God is realised, the rich must work with them. "Let us divide them (the paupers) among us. You take one and I'll take one. We could go to work together. He will see how I work and will learn how to live, and we shall sit at one table, and he will hear a word now from me now from you."⁹⁶

Thus Tolstoy made a plea for manual labour in the interest of the poor and so also in the interest of the rich. People

belonging to the upper class should thus “make use of the hands and feet given them for the purpose for which they are given to him, and to use the devoured food for work which is productive of this food and not to let them become atrophied, not . . . use them only for the purpose of shoving food, drink, cigarettees into the mouth.”⁹⁷

Thus Tolstoy’s life was dedicated to the purpose of promoting the objective of an egalitarian society. His philosophy breathed in a large measure the message of extinguishment of socio-economic disparities, privileges, exploitation and creation of a society, whose cornerstones are equality, fraternity and fellowship. Above everything, Tolstoy indicated in clear and categorical terms in his letter dated September 7, 1910 to Gandhi, the inner contradictions that were then afflicting the society and indicated too the remedy, which stand as clear testimony to his socialist conviction. As he wrote : “Socialism, Communism, Anarchism, Salvation Armies, the growth of crime, freedom from toil, the increasing absurd luxuries of the rich and increased misery of the poor, the fearfully rising number of suicides,—are all indications of that inner contradictions which must and will be resolved. And of course, resolved in such a manner that the law of love will be recognised and all reliance on force abandoned.”⁹⁸

It is but natural to expect that Gandhi who had the privilege of studying Tolstoy’s life and writings “that left a deep impression on my mind”⁹⁹ shall be influenced by the social philosophy of Tolstoy that had a pronouncedly egalitarian bias. Gandhi’s concept of socialism therefore drew deeply from the social philosophy of Tolstoy. His concept of equality, fraternity, fellowship, renunciation, non-exploitation and Bread Labour—the many facets of his socialist thought—were thus enriched by the influence of Tolstoy.

(b) Influence of Ruskin

Another major influence in shaping the philosophy of life of Gandhi and his socialist thought was that of Ruskin. It is even contended that Tolstoy was “partially” indebted to Ruskin for his ideas on socio-economic reorganisation.¹⁰⁰ Although Gandhi read Ruskin’s writing, *Unto This Last* in 1904, sufficiently later than his intimacy with the writings of Tolstoy, it is presumed

that during his student days in London in the late eighties, he must have come under the spell of Ruskin's ideas which had already whipped up a controversy in that country;¹⁰¹ yet speaking about *Unto This Last* Gandhi said, "This was the first book of Ruskin I had ever read."¹⁰² As per his own acknowledgement, whereas Tolstoy's, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* left an abiding impression on him, "the one (book) that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in my life was *Unto This Last*."¹⁰³

Ruskin was an advocate of Christian Socialism that believes in the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of all human beings. He renounced his patrimony worth about £ 200,000 in favour of social welfare activities. He not only was a Christian socialist; he undertook social welfare activities like street cleaning and road digging. He was responsible along with F.D. Maurice, and T. Hughes for the establishment of a working men's college. He planned development of modern industries on socialist lines.¹⁰⁴ Ruskin's Socialist ideas are contained in his *Time and Tide*, *Munera Pulvaris*, and *Unto This Last*. His four articles that were subsequently published in form of *Unto This Last* were so much critical of the accepted economic belief of his days and they whipped up so much controversy in the country that the Cornhill Magazine refused to publish his articles any further. He was almost dreaded like Karl Marx for his denunciation of capitalism.

Ruskin's *Unto This Last* is a tribute to Christian philosophy of love for fellow beings, or in other words love your neighbour as you love yourself. It signalises outright denunciation of the laissezfaire, profit-making, mercantile economy, grounded on exploitation—an economy of getting rich at the expense of one's neighbour. Ruskin denounced the art and science of getting rich or mammon worship at the expense of the community as the very anti-thesis of service to God. As Ruskin said in his chapter on the Veins of Wealth: "The art of making yourself rich, in the ordinary mercantile economist's sense, is therefore equally and necessarily the art of keeping your neighbour poor."¹⁰⁵

Ruskin was not only critical of the mercantile economy or the art and science of getting rich; he considered accumulation of wealth at certain points as the very sign of ill-health of the

body politic. As he said : "As diseased local determination of the blood involves depression of the general health of the system, all morbid local action of riches will be found ultimately to involve a weakening of the resources of the body politic."¹⁰⁶ Mere accumulation of wealth at certain points is not the index of the wealth of a nation. Such accumulation may be effected by immoral and unjust means and that may be at the root of the poverty and deprivation of millions. As Ruskin wrote : "Care in no wise to make more of money, but care to make much of it remembering always the great, palpable, inevitable fact—the rule and root of all economy—that what one person has, another cannot have; and that every atom of substance, of whatever kind, used or consumed, is so much human life spent; which if it issue in the saving present life, or gaining more is well spent, but if not, is either so much life prevented or so much slain."¹⁰⁷ As Gandhi interpreted it, "The rich are responsible for the immorality of the poor, who work like slaves in order to supply them in their luxuries, and have not a moment which they can call themselves their own for self betterment. Envy the rich, the poor also try to be rich and when they fail in their effort, they are angry. They then lose their senses, and try to make money by force or fraud. Thus both wealth and labour are barren of all fruit or else are utilised for chicanery."¹⁰⁸

Accordingly Ruskin pleaded that the right determinant of the riches or wealth of a nation is not accumulation of wealth at few points, or proliferation of factories or industries, but the flow of such wealth into points where they are most wanted and urgently needed. As he said and Gandhi understood it : "The flowing of stream is in one respect a perfect image of the action of wealth, where the land falls, the water flows. So wealth must go where it is required."¹⁰⁹

In order that the national wealth serves real useful purpose it must come to the rescue of the needy and shall bring happiness to as many hearts as possible. Just as the true measure of the wealth of a nation is not its material wealth, the extent of its industrialism and the emergence of factories and workshops, the real value in life consists not in accumulation of wealth by means fair or foul but in its application for removing human miseries. Accordingly as Ruskin said : "That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and

happy human beings; that man is richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others.”¹¹⁰

Hence Ruskin’s primary concern was replacement of accumulative instinct of man by the spirit of “social affection”. The human endeavour should be characterised not by the balance of expediency but by the balance of justice. Since the sufferings of many are inversely related to the idleness and indulgence of a few, the balance can be tilted in favour of social justice if the spirit of exploitation, profit-making and getting rich quick gives place to a spirit of work by all. Not only the privileged shall themselves work, they shall make all efforts to provide employment to all the unemployed as per their ability and offer each working man a wage determined by an “invariable standard” each having at least his absolute minimum. The pastors, the physicians, the lawyers, the merchants and the rest in privileged positions in the society should be “invested with a distinctly paternal authority and responsibility”.¹¹¹

Thus Ruskin’s ideal society is one whose characteristic hallmarks are absence of concentration of wealth and economic power, and equality and social justice. Ruskin’s *Unto This Last* left such an abiding impact on Gandhi’s life and thought that he started experimenting the philosophy contained therein, in his own life, renounced property and privileges, established socialist colonies thereafter, thought in terms of Sarvodaya or the welfare of all, and gave to the translation of Ruskin’s *Unto This Last* the title of *Sarvodaya*. Hence the Gandhian egalitarian ideas were reinforced by the influence of Ruskin.

(c) Influence of Thoreau

The other influence that proved decisive in shaping the socialist thought of Mahatma Gandhi was the influence of Henry David Thoreau, the American philosopher. Thoreau the naturalist, the son of a pencil manufacturer, a bare-footed boy who “drove turkeys and cows to pasture,”¹¹² was himself amply influenced by the philosophy of the East and particularly the religious scriptures of India. In putting to perfect use the library of Emerson, his teacher and benefactor at Harvard, he read, apart from other things, the teachings of Buddha, the

Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. "Reading and re-reading the works of Confucius and Mencius, the sacred books of Persia, the teaching of the Buddha, and the Hindu Upanishads and Vedas, Thoreau was thrilled with his discoveries. But it was the most sacred of Hindu Books, the Bhagavad Gita, that he most admired."¹¹³ Accordingly he wrote in his first book, "The New Testament is remarkable for its pure morality, the best of Hindu scripture, for its pure intellectuality. The reader is nowhere raised into and sustained in a higher, purer or rarer region of thought than in the Bhagavad Gita."¹¹⁴ Thoreau's philosophy of life and writings reflect the influence of the Gita that was Gandhi's "Mother", from which the latter drew sustenance, and accordingly it is not surprising that Gandhi in turn was amply influenced by Thoreau's writings and his socialist thought assumed its shape and form partly under the influence of Thoreau.

It was in the year 1907 that Gandhi after having come under the influence of Tolstoy and Ruskin, came under the spell of Thoreau's philosophy. During the struggle of passive resistance against the South African Government's policy of discrimination he first came across Thoreau's essay on "Civil Disobedience". Subsequently through his contact with other writings of Thoreau, he was deeply influenced by his philosophy. As Gandhi acknowledged in course of his letter to Henry Salt in 1929 : "A friend sent me Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience. It left a deep impression upon me. I translated a portion of that essay for the readers of Indian Opinion, in South Africa which I was then editing and I made copious extracts from that essay for that paper. That essay, seemed to be so convincing and truthful that I felt the need of knowing more of Thoreau and I came across your life of him, his *Walden* and other short essays, all of which I read with great pleasure and equal profit."¹¹⁵

Thoreau's primary contribution to the realm of thought is his plea for defiance of a state based on injustice. A champion of the dignity of man and liberty of the individual, he would sweep aside, the obstacles, preventing fulfilment of their personality. Thoreau advocated a just social and political order devoid of exploitation in form of slavery. While his political testament advocating defiance of an unjust political system is

contained in the *Civil Disobedience*, the economic aspect of the just social order has been portrayed in his masterpiece i.e., *Walden*, although it may appear to a superficial reader of this book that its main emphasis is on unostentatious living.

Thoreau demonstrated by his own experiments that one need not work for more than six weeks a year to earn his upkeep. He did not feel the need for non-vegetarian food for bone-making, nor did he feel the need for changing coats and breaches as often as one can, since "only they who go to soirees and legislative halls must have new coats, coats to change as often as the man changes in them."¹¹⁶ A good and fashionable house he considered superfluous for the inner sublimity and spiritual grandeur. "If it is asserted that civilisation is a real advance in the condition of man . . . it must be shown, that it has produced better dwelling without making them more costly."¹¹⁷ But Thoreau's championing of the cause of unostentatious living stemmed from his spiritual obsession with the acquisitive society he saw all around, with prosperity on one extreme and poverty on the other. As he posed the issue: "I see youngmen, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. . . . Why should they eat their sixty acres, when man is condemned to eat only his peck of dirt?"¹¹⁸

Not only he witnessed enjoyment of unearned income by way of inheritance; he also countenanced poverty, suffering and inadequacies of absolute minimum for millions. He witnessed that most men were being worn out by care and anxieties whose fingers "from excessive toil are too clumsy and tremble too much for that".¹¹⁹ "Some of you we all know, are poor, find it hard to live, are sometimes, as it were gasping for breath" and observed Thoreau "mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation."¹²⁰

Thoreau like any other progressive social scientist viewed that the poverty of the poor was the direct consequence of the luxury of the rich. The ostentatious living of the rich was possible because of the sufferings to which millions of the poor had been subjected. Not only the pauperism of many is the consequence of the privilege of the few; the poverty and the suffering of the millions increase in direct proportion to the

indulgence of the few. As Thoreau observed : "Perhaps it will be found that just in proportion as some have been placed in outward circumstances above the savage, others have been degraded below him. The luxury of one class is counterbalanced by the indigence of another. On the one side is the palace on the other are the alms-house and 'Silent poor'. The myriads who built the pyramids to be the tombs of the Pharaohs were fed on garlic, and it may be were not decently buried. The mason who finishes the cornice of the palace returns at night perchance to a hut not so good as a wigwam. It is a mistake to suppose that in a country where the usual evidence of civilisation exist, the condition of the very large body of the habitants may not be as degraded as that of savages."¹²¹

Thoreau felt concerned how to undo the injustice. He by his personal example demonstrated that a man needs but a little for fulfilling his basic needs and life's meaning is made explicit not by external show but by internal glow, by learning to "love wisdom, as to live according to its dictates" by "a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity and trust"¹²², by stripping one's life of luxury and by dedicating one's life to the cause of the community. Since a man requires so little for his existence, there is no need for accumulation, no need for building palaces; rather man should live as far as possible for others. Accordingly Thoreau suggested : "Be sure that you give the poor the aid they most need though it be your example which leaves them far behind. You boast of spending a tenth part of your income in charity; may be you should spend the nine-tenths so, and done with it."¹²³

Thus Thoreau's primary objective behind his plea for simple life is the spirit of service and employment of the surplus wealth for the benefit of the poor. His sense of justice demanded that justice must be done to the workers and the labourers, "who by their lives and works, are a blessing to mankind." Man's worth lies not in the fulfilment of his carnal desires but in rendering service to others, in transmitting one's glow and brightness, flavour and fragrance to one's neighbours. Hence Thoreau said : "I want the flower and fruit of a man; that some fragrance be wafted over from him to me, and some ripeness flavor our intercourse."¹²⁴

Man need not be a parasite living on others; he should be a

*source of philanthropy, a reservoir of sympathy, piety and spirit of service, ever over-flowing but never exhausted. While not sponging on others, he shall be a constant source of solace for them. "Rescue the drowning and tie your shoestrings. Take your time and set about some free labour."*¹²⁵ He further said : "Do not stay to be an overseer of the poor, but endeavour to become one of the worthies of the world."¹²⁶

Thoreau's message is contained in his saying "if thy hand has plenty, be liberal as the date-tree; but if it affords nothing to give away, be an *azad* or freeman like the Cyprus."¹²⁷ He advocated service to fellow beings which may lead to renunciation or voluntary poverty. Thus Thoreau's philosophy of life emits egalitarian flavour. Passion for a society free from exploitation and inspired by the socialist values like equality, fraternity, fellowship, service to one's neighbour, renunciation, and sharing of prosperity with one's neighbours is clearly in evidence in his social philosophy. Gandhi was so much inspired by the philosophy of Thoreau that in writing to Maganlal on July 12, 1911 he advised : "Copy out a sentence from Thoreau occasionally and give it to Mr. West for use in *Indian Opinion*."¹²⁸ Gandhi's compassion for fellow-beings, stimulated by the writings of Tolstoy and Ruskin thus obtained further confirmation from the study of Thoreau's life and philosophy and its ultimate and final manifestation became an unshakable passion for egalitarian society or a socialist commonwealth.

Thus apart from the messages of the Indian scriptures like the Upanishads and the Gita, Indian religious movements like Vaishnavism, Buddhism and Jainism, and the message of Jesus Christ, Gandhi drew avidly from the philosophy of these three masters to shape his socialist thought. Rather the Gandhian social philosophy, shaped in the direction of socialism under the impact of the religious scriptures of the East and the West obtained further confirmation after he came under the spell of their life and philosophy. Since all these religions preached a philosophy of love for fellow human beings and compassion for the suffering humanity and Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau were of identical opinion, under the cumulative impact of these scriptures and these teachers, his philosophy of life assumed a socialistic tinge. Since the Bhagavad Gita and the New Testa-

ment as much as the philosophy of Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau preached renunciation and voluntary poverty in order to render service to the suffering humanity, Gandhi's socialist thought leans confidently on renunciation on the part of the rich and their embracing of voluntary poverty. Bread Labour is not only enjoined upon by the Gita and the New Testament, but is also advocated by the trio. Gandhi made it the bedrock of his socialist thought. Gandhian concept of Trusteeship of the rich is contained in the philosophy of Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau each one of whom in his own way made a plea for the Trusteeship of the rich people who shall not only hold their riches on behalf of the society but shall also spend them for the benefit of the latter.

To sum up, the Socialist Thought of Mahatma Gandhi, emanated not as a reaction to the inegalitarian system perpetrated by the Industrial Revolutions, but as a part of his ethical and moralistic approach to socio-economic problems driven home to him by his family tradition of Vaishnavism and further stimulated by the Jain, Buddhist and the Christian influence of non-violence and love for one's fellow beings. The injunction of the Upanishad, the Gita and the New Testament, and their emphasis on renunciation and identification with the interests of the community added strength and vigour to his conviction. Tolstoy, Thoreau and Ruskin by their advocacy for a life based on toil and simple life provided a new dimension to his socialist thought. In describing the source of Gandhian social philosophy, as Wilfred Wellock has observed : "It is a fact of some importance that Gandhi's economic, social and ethical principles were first derived from the Sermon on the Mount by way of the writings of Tolstoy and Ruskin. He later found the same teaching in India's sacred scriptures e.g., in the Gita [and Upanishads." ¹²⁰

Although Gandhi's socialist thought was enriched by the heritage both of the East and the West, particularly Eastern religions and Western thought, his indebtedness by no stretch of imagination can be traced to the Scientific Socialism of Marx and Engels.

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CHAPTER 3

NATURE OF GANDHIAN SOCIALISM

Socialism since the days of Plato or Thomas More has many prophets and many patrons. While all of them irrespective of the age and the country to which they belong, subscribe to certain basic values that constitute the essence of socialism, their emphasis varies from person to person depending upon the cultural heritage amidst which they are reared, the creative influences that shape their philosophical outlook, and above all the nature and character of the persons concerned and their overall attitudes and approaches. This explains the difference between the socialist doctrine of the Utopian Socialists and the Scientific Socialists from one another. This also explains the distinction between the socialist thought of Robert Owen, Charles Fourier and Saint Simon among the Utopian Socialists and of Mao Tse-tung and Marshal Tito from that of Marx and Engels and Lenin and Stalin. If Gandhi inspite of his apparent revivalistic approach, under the influence of the Indian cultural tradition of Vaishnavism, Jainism and Buddhism, western religious influence of Christianity and the philosophical influences of Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau, evolved into a convinced socialist, what constitute the basic tenets of his socialist thought and how do they resemble or differ from the socialist thoughts of other varieties and particularly that of the West ?

IDENTITY WITH SOCIALIST MAINSTREAM

The term socialism has been so much used and abused, so differently defined and interpreted that the concept has assumed

a multitude of meanings, greatly varying from one another, and one interpretation sometimes differs so drastically from the other that they convey contrary meanings. As Alexander Gray has observed : "The definitions of socialism that strew the expositions and the criticisms of socialism furnish a depressing prospect. Some are foolish, some are vacuous, some are contradictory, some which appear commendable upto a point, leave gaping omissions".¹ C.E.M. Joad was therefore prompted to remark that socialism is like a hat that has lost its shape because every body wears it.

Yet as G.D.H. Cole has observed, inspite of the variety of meanings and diverse interpretations, what is essential for a correct understanding of socialism is "the discovery of some central core of meaning".² But the "core" of socialism does not consist in the existence of the all-pervasive state, all embracing state-ownership, or absolute control of the state over the individual, the economic system, and the social set up.

(a) An Egalitarian Society

Socialism is the vision of a new civilisation and the science of a new society. It spearheads a revolt against an irrational socio-economic system that heartlessly combines unparalleled material progress with appalling human misery whereunder a few rich and idle, sponging on the toil of millions, waste their unearned wealth in satisfying their superfluous needs, to their own injury and to the injury of the society, while the hard-working peasants and workers packed in unhealthy and insanitary hovels and dirty rags, with children famished, half-naked, malnourished, unlettered or ill-tutored, make the society a diseased and paralysed system with most of its limbs, immobile. Positively speaking, it is an attempt at rationalistic reordering of the existing unjust, inequalitarian, exploitative and privilege-ridden socio-economic order whose hallmark is destitution, deprivation and abysmal poverty of millions in the face of slothfull luxury of a handful of individuals, and creation of an egalitarian society. The Socialist tradition therefore coming down from Plato's Republic, Thomas More's Utopia, Baboeuf's Charter of Equality, Cabot's Icaria St. Simon's Industrial System, Fourier's Phalanstery and Robert Owen's New Moral World, to the communism of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin,

with varieties of ramifications in different countries to suit the indigenous needs of different soils, has this one common vision, i.e., elimination of invidious distinctions between man and man, haves and have-nots, wealth and poverty, prosperity on the one hand and pauperism on the other.

Thus reduction of disparity and bringing all to a level of equality as far as possible and socially desirable is the essence of socialism. Hence the central core of socialism consists according to Gray in "justice or equality".³ Reduction of inequality leads to establishment of social justice and promotes other human values like fraternity and fellowship. This emphasis on equality is also evident from the interpretation given by the Socialist Union of Britain when it says : "It is his equality, his freedom, his fellowship—not only his economic advantage—which have been the ends of socialist endeavour."⁴

Gandhi in spite of his adherence to some high moral principles and religiosity of approach was far from being a doctrinaire in his approach to human or social problems and his concept of socialism stands as a testimony to it. Although he snatched away the wind from the sail of his communist and ultra-socialist critics who branded him as a revivalist and a reactionary, by claiming to be a socialist and a communist, he did not bother much to precisely define what socialism is or is not. Perhaps like Bertrand Russell, he believed that "Socialism like everything else that is vital is rather a tendency than a strictly definable body of doctrine,"⁵ yet he did not lose sight of the very essence of socialist doctrine—the essence of equality. As already indicated earlier, one month before India's independence, Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* : "Socialism is a beautiful word and so far as I am aware, in socialism all the members of society are equal, none low none high. In it the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and the employee, are all on the same level."⁶

Gandhi, the practical idealist not only visualised that equality is the hallmark of socialism and under the system, prince and the peasant, wealthy and the poor shall be brought to the same level; for the attainment of the same end he desired levelling down of the condition of the rich, the wealthy, the prince and the propertied class in whose hand is concentrated

the bulk of the nation's wealth, and levelling up of the condition of the poor, semi-starved and semi-naked millions who live a sub-human existence, so that the contrast between residents of palaces and the pavement-dwellers shall be eliminated.⁷

Thus Gandhi realised that the hard core of socialism is this emphasis on equality. But he was far from being a diehard idealist living in an ivory tower, unconnected with hard realities of life in this world. A pragmatist and a practical idealist through and through, while he visualised a picture of equalisation of the haves and the have-nots, prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, he did not overlook the natural or biological inequality between different individuals and the differences in their physical capabilities, and intellectual calibre. As Gandhi wrote in the *Young India* : "My idea of society is that while we are born equal . . . all have not the same capacity. It is in the nature of things impossible. For instance all cannot have the same height or colour or degree of intelligence etc."⁸ Yet what he aspired is "equalisation of status" of all individuals in the society.⁹

But this concept of equalisation of status has more than ordinary significance in the context of Gandhian socialist doctrine. In the body politic, all individuals are not expected to play identical role. Different individuals play different roles in the society depending upon their respective physical and intellectual abilities and mental makeups and preferences, balanced against the need of the society. Similarly under socialism, where equality is so much stressed, all are not expected to perform the same role in the social framework and under the socialist economic system. Some may be engaged in manual work whereas others may be employed in intellectual labour. Even in respect of manual labour and intellectual labour there may be works of different varieties requiring physical and intellectual vigour of different degree and intensity; yet according to Gandhi all these works, involving either physical or intellectual labour have their due importance in the society and all individuals engaged in different types of socially necessary labour must occupy almost equal status in the society, none being treated as superior to others. As Gandhi wrote : "In the individual body the head is not high because it is the top of the body nor are the soles of the feet low because they touch



Gandhiji dreaming of Socialist India at Sabarmati Ashram.



**She was sacrificed at the altar of Gandhian Socialism.
(Kasturba—Gandhi's wife)**



Putlibai—Gandhi's mother, and a deeply religious lady who lent spiritual tone to Gandhian Socialism.



Raichandbhai, who deeply influenced Gandhi.

the earth. Even as members of the individual body are equal so are the members of society. This is socialism.”¹⁰

Considered from another angle, the richness of the society is measured not by uniform development of all individuals or their identity in all respects, but by the diversity in respect of their intellectual and moral attainments. As it has been contended by the Socialist Union, “The equality socialists demand is not concerned with the obliteration of variety. The very diversity of individual fulfilment is an enrichment of society to be encouraged and cherished, not ironed out of existence.”¹¹ Under Gandhian scheme of things, the prince and the peasant, the rich and the poor, the employer and the employee, may perform different duties, depending upon their intellectual and physical capacity, their temperament and training and their inclinations and preferences in the context of social needs. But all the same, Gandhian socialism presupposes a picture of unity in diversity, social and economic equality inspite of different social assignments. His scheme of things gives equal relevance to different jobs, and different individuals engaged in these different jobs in the body politic, as is the case with different organs of the body. Accordingly he said : “Looking at society all the world over, there is nothing but duality of plurality. Unity is conspicuous by its absence. This man is high that one is low. In the unity of my conception there is perfect unity in the plurality of designs.”¹²

Thus the Gandhian concept of socialism puts at its core equality of all individuals or equal status of all inspite of the natural or biological diversities and diversities in respect of the functions they perform in the society.

(b) Economic Equality

If socialism is primarily the vision of an egalitarian society and equality stands at the very core of the concept, the equality that becomes the deciding factor in engendering an egalitarian society is not political equality but economic equality. The Socialist Union of Britain has observed : “What socialists have wanted to see embodied in the economy were the universal human ideals of equality freedom and fellowship.”¹³ But of the three sublime socialist ideals stated above, economic equality is the basic ideal from which the two other ideals

follow as natural corollaries. Freedom and fellowship are the direct concomitants of economic equality since in a society suffering from economic disparity the privileged classes dominate over the under-privileged and the rich exploit the poor by making use of their superior economic power and deprive the rest of the society of their freedom, thereby making fraternity and fellowship impracticable and impossible of attainment. Hence all brands of socialists, whether Utopian or Scientific, concentrate their attention on economic equality or in other words on reduction of economic disparity between the haves and the have-nots or affluence and luxury on the one hand and pauperism and misery on the other.

Gandhi as a practical idealist, inspite of the spiritual tone of his social philosophy, did not overlook the economic aspect altogether; instead he accorded an important place to economic equality in his socialist thought. Although he waged a battle royal against British imperialism and remained at the forefront of the Indian political struggle for national liberation, no nationalist realised more than him that political independence, even with the apparatus of liberal democracy such as universal franchise and Parliamentary system of government, is a mere empty device, devoid of substance, unless reinforced by economic equality. Political equality or each man having one vote in the matter of determination of public policy has little practical significance when the vote of the poor man is bartered away for a few pieces of bread. The privileged people with control over moneybags may make a mockery of the so-called political equality devoid of the content of economic equality. Accordingly Gandhi pleaded : "The basis of socialism is economic equality. There can be no Ramarajya in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which a few rule in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat."¹⁴ Writing in the Constructive Programme, he wrote a few years earlier : "Economic equality is the master key to non-violent independence. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nations wealth on the one hand and a levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other."¹⁵

Thus bridging the economic gap between the haves and the have-nots, the privileged and the under-privileged, reducing the

existing inequality between them and making the poor richer and the rich poorer were considered the very essence of Gandhian concept of Swaraj or Socialism. Gandhi felt that a non-violent social system and a non-violent political system of his conception can be conceived only in the context of reduction of economic inequality. As he wrote : "A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility as long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class nearby cannot last one day in a free India."¹⁶ An apostle of non-violence that he was, Gandhi felt so much obsessed with the sight of this disparity between the rich and the poor that he even conceded to the inevitability of a bloody civil war unless the balance is tilted in favour of economic equality.¹⁷

But Gandhi was never a fadist; he was ever a pragmatist. As one of the underdogs himself, while he advocated, reduction of the gap between the rich and the poor and creation of a society of equals, he was not handicapped by any myopic vision so as to lose sight of the fact that men are not by all measures and standards equal in all respects. Inequality does exist between man and man in respect of physical features, mental calibre and intellectual vigour.¹⁸ Even blood-brothers and sisters differ from one another in respect of intellectual and physical vigour. Gandhi did not overlook such differences; yet he advocated reduction of disparity in respect of economic advantages and early realisation of a reasonable measure of economic equality.

But Gandhi's concept of equality is pronouncedly rationalistic. It is not a concept of absolute economic equality between all individuals having no rhyme and reason to justify such a measure. The emphasis is not so much on equal distribution as on equitable distribution of economic welfare depending upon the absolute and essential needs of each individual. As a pragmatist Gandhi did not overlook the fact that the essential needs of different individuals may differ depending on their constitution and mental and moral makeup. No two persons can be expected to have exactly identical demands of their body or their soul; therefore economic equality of Gandhi's conception takes cognisance of these factors, when he said : "The real

implication of equal distribution is that each man shall have the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs and no more. For example if one man has a weak digestion and requires only a quarter of a pound of flour for his bread and another needs a pound both should be in a position to satisfy their wants.”¹⁹

Gandhi was asked at the Constructive Workers’ Conference during his tour of Madras in 1946 about the real implications of economic equality. He replied that economic equality of his conception did not mean that each individual shall have literally the same amount of goods and commodities; on the other hand it meant that every body should have enough to satisfy his natural needs and no more. An old man like him may require some warm clothings in winter while people at the prime of their youth may well manage with ordinary linen. A sick man like him may require goats’ milk and some fruits where as people with normal health may manage with ordinary diet. An elephant may require thousand times more food than an ant and a man with a large family may require sufficiently more than a man with no dependents. Hence the real implication of his concept of economic equality was “To each according to his need.”²⁰

Gandhi was pragmatic enough to realise that even his concept of “To each according to his need” may be distorted by unscrupulous individuals and used as a lever to perpetuate inequality and exploitation. They may justify their privileged position in the economic and the social set up on the ground of their fabricated greater need. To forestall such an unwarranted posture Gandhi said : “Let no one justify the glaring difference between the classes and the masses the prince and the pauper by saying that the former need more. That will be idle sophistry and a travesty of my argument.”²¹

Therefore although Gandhi was prepared to tolerate certain amount of disparity in respect of economic welfare of the people on the ground of differential needs of different individuals, the difference should not be glaring. Besides, the basic needs of all must be satisfied first before the claim of any individual for difference in respect of economic advantages can be socially sustained. As he felt : “Every one must have a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one’s children and adequate medical relief.”²²

Although Gandhi was an advocate of minimisation of wants and of the idea that the Kingdom of God and mammon worship can not go hand in hand, he would not taboo everything beyond absolute minimum or bare necessities; but taking into account the abysmal poverty of millions, he advocated that the absolute needs of all must be satisfied before the superfluous need of any is attended.

Gandhi was not a believer in the distribution of doles among individuals on the basis of their essential needs. Each must earn his absolute minimum in exchange of hard days' labour. His idea of "To each according to his need" had its other side too i.e., "From each according to his ability." Thus the Gandhian ideal of need based economic advantages resembles the ultimate communist ideal of "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need." The Gandhian formula tries to jump over the Communist concept of work-wage relationship during the transitional period of socialistic transformation where people work according to their ability and are remunerated according to their work. Thus Gandhi advocated that all individuals irrespective of the nature of their jobs—whether performing physical labour or mental labour—should be equally remunerated so that all can have access to at least their bare necessities of life. Hence he said a few months before independence: "I have no doubt that if India is to live an exemplary life of independence, which would be the envy of the world, all the bhangis, doctors, lawyers, teachers, merchants and others would get the same wage for an honest day's work."²³ He was practical enough to realize that all may not concede to his ideal, yet it was an ideal worth striving for to make India a happy land for all its inhabitants.

Gandhi realised that although his ideal of equal remuneration for all types of work is a noble ideal worth striving for, yet in communist countries, the ideal had been modified so as to tolerate certain amount of difference in the wage rate of manual labour and intellectual labour or of different types of manual labour and intellectual labour. Besides he also realised that difference in physical capacity and intellectual creativity of individuals when taken for granted, payment of equal wage or remuneration for all varieties of work of equal duration irrespective of the quality of work and the quantity of output

*may sap one's initiative, creativity and efficiency and as a result the society may suffer from economic stagnation. , Accordingly he said : "My idea of society is that while we are born equal, meaning that we have a right to equal opportunity all have not the same capacity. It is in the nature of things impossible therefore in the nature of things some will have ability to earn more and other less. I would allow a man of intellect to earn more. I would not cramp his talent."*²⁴

The above quotation from Gandhi's writing may give one an impression that under special circumstances he was prepared to allow certain amount of disparity in income. But when his clarification that in case of inconsistency between any two of his writings or utterances his subsequent statement should be taken as valid,²⁵ is accepted, the apparent inconsistency between his concept of economic equality and inequality in income may be resolved. Gandhi prescribed in his own inimitable way a panacea for curing this ill of inequality in case higher remuneration is paid for superior ability. As his prescription goes : "But the bulk of his greater earnings must be used for the good of the State, just as the income of all earning sons of the father go to the common family fund."²⁶

(c) Equality of Opportunity

If equality constitutes the core of socialism and the socialists of all hues harp on economic and social equality of all individuals in the society, such equalities for their proper realisation presuppose another type of equality i.e , equality of opportunity. For ensuring equality of social status, and economic equality, equality of opportunity holds the key. Both from the standpoint of full-blossoming of the individual personality that is the socialist ideal and the all-round enrichment of the socialist society, equality of opportunity is essential and indispensable. Hence in modern times there has been a considerable shifting of emphasis by the socialists from equality to equality of opportunity. Accordingly the Socialists Union is of opinion : "It is not the differences which nature has ordained or fate decreed against which socialists have protested; that would be nonsense. Their revolt has been against the privileges which society concedes to some and not to others."²⁷

Even if the socialists visualise the creation of an egalitarian

society and talk in terms of economic equality, very few socialists advocate equal distribution of economic benefits among different members of the society in disregard of their respective contribution to the society. Hence even in Soviet Union that claims to represent true socialism, the principle governing distribution of economic privileges is "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work." Even the ultimate Communist ideal lays emphasis on the "ability" of the individuals when it says "from each" according to his ability, to each according to his need." But the "ability" of an individual is partly due to his natural, innate and inherent qualities and partly an acquisition obtained through external stimuli or opportunities provided for the development of these natural and inherent faculties. Hence the natural inequality between individuals in respect of ability is sometimes accentuated by inequality of opportunity provided to them by the society. It very often happens that people with inferior talent, shine in life quite brilliantly, because of better opportunities they get from the society to cultivate their faculties, whereas men of far superior calibre and intellect, rot perpetually due to lack of adequate opportunities. Because of this difference in opportunities, ability to work and earn also differs, leading to difference in prosperity and wealth which is carried down from generation to generation. As a result as C.A.R. Crosland has observed : "The well-born fool has a better chance than the poor-born genius, and that the son can hope to rise no higher than his father but is condemned to fill that station to which it shall please God to call him."²⁸

Hence in order that equality gathers any real content in the context of a socialist society and the society benefits from the superior ability of its members, adequate opportunities must be provided by the society to each individual for the unfoldment of his innate faculties thereby increasing his ability to work and earn and make maximum contribution to the society. The Socialist Union of Britain is therefore of opinion : "What a man makes of his life, depends on two things—his qualities and his opportunities. Society cannot determine his qualities but it can determine his opportunities and it is here that the principle of equality has its application."²⁹

Gandhi like other socialists while emphasising on egalitaria-

nism did not miss the significance of equality of opportunity for engendering an egalitarian society. Of course he acknowledged that by the very nature of things individuals can not be equal in all respects. Yet he was convinced that men are born equal in the sense that they have a right to equal opportunities. People with varied natural ability or talent may react differently to the same opportunity. Some may take full advantage of the situation and others may fail to grasp it. Prosperity or adversity may depend upon the way the opportunities are exploited by different persons; yet from the side of the society there should be no lapses. Gandhi as much a socialist as a practical idealist viewed : "I want to allow no differentiation between the son of a weaver, of an agriculturist and of a school master."³⁰

Gandhi realised that given equality of opportunity the prevailing inequality in the society—social and economic, may be considerably toned down and the path may be paved for an egalitarian society. But in the context of the Indian society the causes of disparity were not merely economic in nature; caste consideration was another cause of social inequality where untouchables were subjected to discrimination in public places and educational institutions that deprived them of the requisite opportunities to cultivate their talents to attain their best selves as per their natural endowments. Gandhi said : "The bhangi is or should be on a par with the Brahmin in all social relations. There is no reason why he should not, other things being equal, occupy the chair which Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad occupied with distinction. I would be happy to see the day when a bhangi working as such is in the presidential chair."³¹

But Gandhi's dream of having an untouchable as the President not only of the Congress but of the Indian Republic can be fulfilled only if the untouchables are afforded adequate opportunities for the development of their innate faculties. In the context of socialism, equality of opportunity implies something different from the ordinary concept of equality of opportunities to all. "Equality of opportunity" it has been said "implies something more than an equal start with the race, left to the swiftest."³² Those who are physically or mentally deficient require special attention and care. Gandhi realised this aspect of equality of opportunity more than most of his

contemporaries. The untouchables, the socially suppressed and exploited classes, needed special attention and liberal grants to raise their status socially and economically. They needed weightage in the matter of opportunities to be available to them by the state. That may involve depriving the privileged class of their money-bags; but Gandhi would perhaps condone it in order to provide equal opportunity in the sense of more than proportionate privilege to those who are socially suppressed and underprivileged ³³

A few months before independence in a plea for the abolition of untouchability and the disabilities of the under-privileged classes and the Schedule Castes, Gandhi advocated that additional opportunities should be provided to them to elevate themselves in all respects and to make social integration possible and egalitarian society a practicable proposition. As he said: "Hindus are all one, no high, no low. All the neglected classes such as Scheduled Classes and the so-called aboriginal classes should receive special treatment in the matter of education, housing etc."³⁴

DISTINCTIVENESS OF GANDHIAN SOCIALISM

(a) Pragmatic Approach To Socialism

Although Gandhian socialism has certain traits that are common to socialism of all varieties, it is characterised by certain others which distinguish it from the socialism of some varieties and particularly the Western and the Marxian variety. Such distinctive features are as much due to the nature and character of Gandhi's philosophical outlook as they are due to the creative influences of the cultural tradition and heritage of India under which he was nourished.

Gandhi as a socialist no doubt subscribed to the core concepts of socialism i.e., an egalitarian society, economic equality and equality of opportunity and in this respect conformed to the broader socialist tradition and wider socialist fraternity; but he did not overlook the fact that the contours of his socialism and for that matter of Indian Socialism shall be something different from the contours of western socialism. Even Marx and Engels in their Preface to the German edition of the Manifesto of the Communist Party acknowledged that the socialist principles of different

countries at different stages of socio-economic development may differ from one another depending upon the objective conditions prevailing therein. As they observed : "The practical application of the principles will depend as the Manifesto itself states, everywhere and at all times on the historical conditions for the time being existing. . . ." ³⁵

The Soviet socialist experiment under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin has demonstrated that no principle is a safe guide to understand the socialist system of any country, and the nature of socialism, and the technique for its attainment in a predominantly agricultural country shall be different from those in a predominantly industrial country. Following the deviationist tradition established by Lenin, the socialists of other communist countries and the communist leadership in China have adopted their own principles and technique and modified the socialist principles to suit the objective conditions prevailing in their respective countries. Hence Ashoka Mehta has very appropriately observed : "Different socialist ideas and theories have relevance and truth in different circumstances. The ideas are in a sense related to the situation and also are reflections of thinker's nature and character." ³⁶

Gandhi was opposed to the concept of racial superiority and the notion of cultural superiority of any nation. An advocate of the idea of human brother-hood and international co-operation, it was not in his grain to look down upon the cultural heritage of any country or the west; yet he was conscious of the fact that the Indian and Oriental cultural traditions and heritage differed fundamentally from those of the west and what is good for the western nations may not be so for India with a different cultural tradition and heritage. As Gandhi writes : "What is good for one nation situated in one condition is not necessarily good enough for another differently situated. One man's food is often another man's poison. Physical geography of a country has a predominant share in determining its culture. A fur-coat may be a necessity for the dweller in the polar regions, it will smother those living in the equatorial regions." ³⁷ Coming to the concept of socialism proper, Gandhi equally believed that his socialism and for that matter Indian socialism cannot be a carbon copy or imitation of western socialism. Of course he did not distinguish between

socialism and communism; nonetheless he believed that socialism and communism of India and the East must differ from the socialism and communism of the West inspite of the identity of their ultimate objectives since "Socialism and Communism of the West are based on certain conceptions which are fundamentally different from ours."³⁸

What are the conceptions of the West that are basically different from ours ? What are the values that India cherishes that are fundamentally at variance with those of the West ? S. Radhakrishnan speaking about the Asian view of man has said : "This view is essentially a religious one."³⁹

The spirit of India and Asia is thus religious and spiritual and encompasses poise, contemplation, and inward vision as opposed to materialistic conception of life of the west. As Gandhi looked at the west : "Western nations are today groaning under the heels of the monster god of materialism. Their moral growth has become stunted. They measure their progress in £ s.d."⁴⁰

But Gandhi considered material progress as the very anti-thesis of real progress and against the very spirit of Indian culture; rather a "fall from the ideal". Recalling the cultural heritage of India he said : "This land of ours was once, we are told, the abode of Gods. It is not possible to conceive gods inhabiting a land which is made hideous by the smoke and the din of mill chimneys and factories, and whose road ways are traversed by rushing engines, dragging numerous cars crowded with men who know not for the most part what they are after"⁴¹

If materialism is the very anti-thesis of Indian culture, Indian socialism as distinct from western socialism must steer clear of mere material progress. If spiritualism and religiosity are the sheet-anchor of Indian culture it is natural to expect that Indian socialism must reflect such spiritualism and religiosity. While material prosperity of the individual should not be completely neglected by Indian socialism the importance of ethical and spiritual development of man should not be lost sight of; rather Indian socialism should comprehend a balanced development of man with as much emphasis on his moral and spiritual development as on his material prosperity or still more greater emphasis on the development of moral and spiritual

dimension of man.

Harping on the difference between the western approach and the Indian approach to socialism Gandhi maintained that Western socialism is based on the assumption of the fundamental selfishness and greed of each individual, whereas the Indian approach presumes just the reverse of the same. Dilating on the difference he observed: "One such conception is their belief in the essential selfishness of human nature. I do not subscribe to it for I know that the essential difference between man and the brute is that the former can respond to the call of the spirit in him, can rise superior to the passions that he owns in common with the brute, and therefore superior to selfishness and violence, which belong to the brute nature and not to immortal spirit of man. That is the fundamental conception of Hinduism."

If the Indian concept of socialism is based on the fundamental notion of the ability of the individuals to rise above their brute nature and their potentiality to sublimate their self, look beyond their individual passions and greed, identify their interest with those of the community and surrender their self on the altar of welfare of the society, it need not depend upon the Marxian strategy of class-conflict, violent civil-war and forcible overthrow and liquidation of the bourgeoisie for the sake of socialist transformation—a strategy that arose as an off-shoot of the Marxian belief in the inherent selfishness of man and their incapacity to rise above self and voluntarily surrender their privilege in favour of the underdogs and the underprivileged. Particularly in the context of the Indian cultural heritage of Vaishnavism, Buddhism, Jainism, and their emphasis on non-violence, non-injury, renunciation and self-sacrifice, adoption of violent technique for the attainment of socialism in Indian conditions was considered superfluous by Gandhi.

S. Radhakrishnan has observed: "India has stood for an ideal that does not make man merely a creature of time, dependent solely on his material conditions and possessions and confined to them. We have proclaimed that the world is under moral law, that the life is the scene of man's moral law, that the life is the scene of man's moral choice. It is dharmakshetra."⁴² From this Hindu conception or the Indian concept of man follows as a corollary the notion that nobody is beyond

redemption however depraved he may be. As S. Radhakrishnan has observed : "From the emphasis on the immanence of the Divine in man, it follows that there is not one single individual however criminal he may be who is beyond redemption There are no individuals who are utterly evil—All men are the children of the Immortal,—amrtasya putra."⁴³ Under the impact of the Indian cultural heritage Gandhi writes : "One must believe in the possibility of every person, however depraved being reformed under human and skilled treatment. We must appeal to the good in human beings and expect reponse."⁴⁴

Interpreted in the context of socialism it may mean that in the Indian background the bourgeoisie, and the propertied and the privileged classes who by practising all sorts of cruelties, inhumanities and exploitation deprive the society of its due, accumulate wealth and perpetrate an inegalitarian social structure, can be won over to the side of socialism by the application, of the technique of persuasion and conversion. Hence Gandhi observed that whereas the socialism or the communism of the west rested on violence and conflict, Indian socialism, can subsist on harmonious co-operation of labour and capital and the landlord and the tenants.

The Indian cultural heritage apart from its credit side has its debit side too, in the persistence of a distorted and outmoded caste system that has vitiated the Indian social and community life. The caste system that was originally devised as a technique of functional division of society had become a dead-weight round the neck of Indian social structure with the cancerous growth of a system of untouchability. Under its weight the Indian society stood fragmented and disintegrated and the people of different castes and particularly the Caste Hindus and the Untouchables were confronting each other with the spirit of warring Marxian social classes like Free-men and Slaves, Guild masters and Journeymen or the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat.

Sorokin is of opinion : "If we wish to eliminate wars and establish a creative altruistic order, we must modify simultaneously our culture, our social institutions and the personality of our citizenry in an altruistic direction." Standing at the threshold of a revolutionary epoch of national history and accepting the status of a self appointed herald of the new civilization,

Gandhi could not miss the point that the cultural ethos and the social structure needed streamlining and restructuring by way of removing the cancer of untouchability from the body social in order to create an egalitarian society based on equality, fraternity and fellowship.

Gandhi's awareness of this distinction between the Western culture and the Indian culture, the basis of Western socialism and Indian socialism and the objective situation prevalent in India during his time, prompted him to say : "Let us study our Eastern institutions in that spirit of scientific enquiry and we shall evolve a truer socialism and a truer communism that the world has yet dreamt of. It is surely wrong to presume that western socialism or communism is the last word on the question of mass poverty."⁴⁵

If Gandhi was convinced of such a distinction between the Indian culture and the Western culture and the basis of Indian socialism and western socialism, his socialism derived some of its features from this special Indian background. Besides Gandhi's philosophical outlook, the overtone of religiosity, ethicality, morality and spirituality, nourished by the life and the messages of masters like Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau, also determined the nature of his socialist thought. From the composite effects of the influences of the Indian cultural heritage and his life's philosophy emerged the Gandhian concept of identity between socialism and communism, emphasis on social equality, the ideal of Sarvodaya, non-violent socialism, concept of Bread Labour, theory of Trusteeship, and above all, the doctrine of socialism through the diminution of state power.

(b) Socialism and Communism

Gandhi lived and worked and elaborated and propagated his theory of socialism during the days when the Communist Party of India was active in Indian Politics and the Communist Party of Soviet Union was busy in the act of reconstruction of Soviet economy and society after the Bolshevik Revolution. Gandhian socialism is very often compared and contrasted with communism. Hence in order to properly understand Gandhian concept of socialism, it is necessary to know Gandhi's attitude towards communism and the interrelationship he established between communism and socialism.

The co-authors of Scientific Socialism christened their socialist blue-print as *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. This led to a spate of confusions as to whether Marx and Engels were the philosophers of communism or socialism. To dispel such confusion from the minds of the readers, H.J. Laski entitled his interpretation of the "Manifesto of the Communist Party" as "Communist Manifesto : Socialist Land-mark" and advanced arguments as to why the socialist thesis went by the title "Communist Manifesto" instead of "Socialist Manifesto"⁴⁶, although it was in the nature of a socialist blue-print. Marx and Engels did not distinguish between Communism and Socialism and for them both the terms were almost synonymous. Their primary concern was the creation in place of the old bourgeois society, "an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."⁴⁷

Hence the distinction between Socialism and Communism is one of post-Marxian origin. Particularly the distinction is a Soviet coinage intended to condone and camouflage the new type of exploitative, class-ridden, and inegalitarian society created after the Bolshevik Revolution. The Soviet system is considered as a socialist system, or the second best and not a communist system and the Soviet State is termed as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and not a Union of Soviet Communist Republics.

In Soviet parlance Socialism is considered as a half-way house between capitalism and communism. Communism is considered as the ultimate ideal towards which the Soviet system makes steady progress with the help of this intermediate system i.e. Socialism. Socialism as a means prepares the ground and paves the way towards the realisation of communism, "the higher phase of the new society". Socialism according to the Soviet social scientists is still an imperfect state of human society not completely free from inequality and class stratification and all forms of disparities. Hence it has been observed : "In the socialist phase, society. . . . remain stratified. Given the division of labour between town and country-side, between mental and manual work, differences exist between the working class, peasantry and intellectuals. Under communism however, the division of society into classes and social strata ends."⁴⁸

During socialism—the still imperfect stage of social develop-

ment—inequality still prevails, material rewards being distributed in direct proportion to the quantity and quality of work rendered to the society. The governing rule of work and reward is, “From each according to his ability, to each according to his work.” Hence as it has been observed: “In the socialist phase it is still not possible to provide equal conditions for all: political equality yes, but not economic and social equality.”⁴⁹

But communism is viewed as a stage of development of human society where absolute equality in respect of social and economic endowments prevails. The fundamental principle of communism is “from each according to his ability to each according to his need”⁵⁰; yet communism the perfect state of human society evolves out of socialism the imperfect state of social development. Thus “Communism is built on the foundation of a consolidated and developing socialism.”⁵¹ Socialism and communism are therefore not synonymous; one is the means and the other is the end; one leads the way to the other.

But Gandhi did not distinguish between socialism and communism. His primary concern was an egalitarian society free from exploitation and disparity. Hence while he championed the cause of a class-less and privilege-free society, he did not find much meaning in indulging in the hair-splitting controversy as to the distinction between socialism and communism.

Gandhi took pride in claiming that he was a socialist. At the same time he was not hesitant to tell Louis Fischer during his conversation with the latter, “I call myself a communist also.”⁵² Thus it appears that for Gandhi socialism and communism are almost synonymous and interchangeable terms meaning to a large extent the same thing. Accordingly he wrote in 1934 “Our socialism or communism, should therefore be based on non-violence, and on harmonious co-operation of labour and capital, landlord and tenants.”⁵³ Speaking in 1946 he expressed the idea that his socialism and communism are not two distinct and separate concepts. As he said: “My Communism is not very different from socialism. It is a harmonious blending of the two.”⁵⁴

Considered from another angle, Gandhi wanted to realise through socialism what the communists dream of attaining in the stage of communism. Gandhi a practical idealist was not prepared to risk a safe today for the sake of a doubtful to-

tomorrow. Like Newman whose "Lead Kindly Light" was his favourite hymn, one step was enough for him and he was not prepared to grope in the dark for the sake of a doubtful tomorrow and thus tolerate inequality, exploitation and violence, today, for the sake of egalitarianism in future. He was concerned with an egalitarian society here and now. You may call it socialism or communism. But he was not prepared to conceive a half-way house—socialism—on the Soviet model with its paraphernalia of a totalitarian state system with the hope that it shall create conditions for the emergence of communism—the real egalitarian society as conceived by the communists—sometime in the future. Hence under Gandhian socialism the emphasis is on providing each individual, what communists plan to provide in the highest form of communist society—"a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one's children and adequate medical relief."⁵⁵ His socialism is not to be hindered and huddled by the Soviet emphasis on "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work" which still perpetuates an inequalitarian society. Even during this stage of socialism, Gandhi visualises elimination of distinction between manual labour and intellectual labour and advocates payment of equal wage to all irrespective of the quality of labour performed by them i.e., equal wage for lawyers, doctors, teachers, merchants, bhangies, etc.⁵⁶

Hence the Gandhian concept of Socialism accepts as its immediate ideal the communist maxim of "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need", instead of waiting for its realisation in a distant and doubtful future. Thus the communist ideal merges in the socialist ideal of Gandhi and he does not distinguish between socialism and communism.

For Gandhi, the primary consideration was an egalitarian society and communism, socialism, or any other 'ism' based on egalitarian principle was as much acceptable as the other. He was more concerned with the content than the nomenclature and socialism and communism conveyed to him the same message and stand for the same ideal.

(c) Social Equality

Socialism of the West is primarily concerned with economic equality and the Western socialists including Marx and Engels,

Lenin and Stalin deal mainly with the problem of removing economic inequality. Economic inequality emanating from the capitalist or bourgeois system of production and exploitation is considered by the western socialists as the gravest threat to an egalitarian society. Accordingly the socialists of the West accept as their immediate objective, the elimination of economic disparities.

There is no disputing the fact that the primary inspiration of all socialists of the West, whether Utopian or Scientific is ethical — a rational reordering of the society so as to generate a society of equals and promote the spirit of fellowship and fraternity among the members of the society. But they somehow believe that by remedying the irrationality in the economic system i.e., the bourgeois system of production, and by removing the disparity in the possession of economic benefit and power they cannot only lay the foundation but also complete the super-structure of socialism. They do not bother much about any elaborate arrangement for the reordering of the society or any tampering with the existing social system. The concept of inevitability of socialism, that forms the bed-rock of Scientific Socialism of Marx and Engels—that monopoly capitalism by its inner contradiction shall automatically pave the way for the emergence of socialism—precludes any conscious effort to reorganise the society although Marx and Engels did not rule out conscious effort by the Proletariat to seize political and economic power from the bourgeoisie and Lenin and Stalin sanctified the concept of violent seizure of such power by the proletariat for the sake of socialist transformation.

Gandhi's concept of socialism on the other hand, with the objective conditions prevalent in India in the background, is concerned as much with social equality as with economic equality, and as much with conscious effort for social reorganisation as with conscious effort for economic transformation. If egalitarian society is the ultimate objective, the society must be consciously planned out and the change-over consciously effected. Mere tampering with the problem of economic inequality cannot squarely solve the problems of an inegalitarian society, and create a society grounded on the principle of social justice. As Sri Jagjivan Ram has written : "The social problem apart from the problem of untouchables, it is generally held,

is economic. If the economic problem is rightly tackled the rest need not matter. That is in my opinion, a very superficial view. I have always held and here Gandhi's dictum of the indivisibility of life supports me, that our approach must be integrated and that while the economic and political must receive adequate attention, the social may be ignored only at peril to both."⁵⁷ Hence while thinking of an egalitarian society, Gandhi laid as much emphasis on social reform leading to social equality as on economic reform leading to economic equality.

Gandhi as a pragmatist realised that in the Indian context mere reorganisation of economy to give it a more egalitarian appearance may not be the sure index of a society grounded on fellowship and fraternity. He had to encounter problems peculiar to India that Marx and other western socialists were not confronted with and so his solution became different from that of Marx and the Marxists who lay undue emphasis on economic factors, in complete disregard of social ethos and conscious social reorganisation.

For example, Marx who encountered the offshoots of the bourgeois revolution i.e., division of society into two antagonistic groups constituted on the basis of economic privileges or exploitation, not only fashioned his doctrine of economic determinism but also discovered the remedy to the inequalitarian society it engendered in economic solution. He with his collaborator Frederic Engels not only wrote in the Manifesto of the Communist Party, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles"; they also considered that the class stratification was determined by economic considerations alone. For them the social classes that stood opposed to one another in the past i.e., free-men vrs. slaves, patricians vrs. plebeians, lords vrs. serfs and guild masters vrs. journeymen, were formed on the basis of economic self-interest. The society of their own days they felt had been vertically divided into two hostile groups on the basis of antagonistic economic interests and they observed: "Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other, Bourgeoisie and Proletariat."

All other classes like the handicrafts-men, peasants, the petty-bourgeoisie and the shopkeepers, they believed, had vanished as independent entities and had only been assimilated

into the class of Proletariat. Hence they had to contend with the problem posed by the bourgeois system of production that had split the society into two classes i.e., the economic haves and the have-nots, or the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat. They contended that if the problems of a bourgeois economy i.e., system of ownership, production and distribution, that give rise to two hostile economic groups are solved, division of society into two antagonistic classes shall also be liquidated. If the Proletariat owns, controls and directs economic power through the seizure of political power, such class division may be eliminated and social equality leading to fellowship and fraternity will emerge.

But Gandhi had to contend with a society dominated not by economic considerations alone. A multiplicity of factors, some ethnic and some religious that influence the feudalistic, pre-capitalistic and pastoral societies were clearly in evidence. As Dr. K. N. Raj has observed in a different context: "Here was not one society divided into simple Marxist categories such as of landlords, and peasants, capitalists and labourers but a conglomeration of small pre-capitalist societies divided further by various forms of tribal and other totems and taboos extremely conscious of their separateness and only very loosely linked together by economic and other interests."⁵⁸

Gandhi encountered that the social stratification of India formed according to the Hindu scriptures and particularly the Rig. Veda, originally designed to ensure division of labour within the framework of an integrated society of equals, had been perverted and a hide-bound hierarchical, caste-ridden system had emerged. He witnessed that the practice of caste superiority and inferiority had become deeply entrenched into the body social of India and the cancer of untouchability that had emanated as an off-shoot of the caste system and had perpetrated an exploitative inegalitarian social structure had eaten into the vitals of the society. As Jawaharlal Nehru observed: "The ultimate weakness and failing of the caste system and the Indian social structure, were that they degraded a mass of human being and gave them no opportunities to get out of that condition, educationally, culturally, economically. . . . In the context of society today the caste system and much that goes with it are wholly incompatible, reactionary, restrictive and barriers to

progress. There can be no equality in status and opportunity within its frame-work nor can there be political democracy and much less economic democracy."⁵⁹

Gandhi revolted against this pyramidal structure of caste system with the upper classes looking down upon the lower classes and particularly the Shudras as untouchables. He felt that no Swaraj and no egalitarian society can be conceived within the framework of such hide-bound caste structure dominated by the practice of untouchability. Although he was a devout Hindu and stood firmly by the side of the Vedic concept of social stratification he was far from being a "fanatic Hindu".⁶⁰ As a devout Hindu, he did not subscribe to the view that the Hindu society can legitimately be regarded as one of the best examples of a hierarchical stratification of a social order intended to perpetuate inequalities.⁶¹ Rather he was a votary of Varnashrama Dharma, or the Hindu concept of division of society into four different classes depending on the nature of the social obligations that the individuals are expected to perform. The four fold classification of the Hindu society as enjoined by the Rigveda—the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras—was considered by Gandhi as division of society into four social classes interrelated to one another by the common bond of duty in their respective capacities to the society. As he said : "The law of Varna means the following on the part of us all of the hereditary and traditional calling of our forefathers in a spirit of duty."⁶²

Understanding Varnashram Dharma in its proper perspective he rejected out-right the concept of superiority or inferiority of any social class. Under the influence of the Vedic concept of Varnashram Dharma he believed that the fulfilment of one's social obligation, does not confer any privilege or superiority on any one class as against the other. As he said : "If Varna reveals the law of one's being and thus the duty one has to perform, it confers no right and the idea of superiority or inferiority is wholly repugnant to it. All Varnas are equal, for the community depends no less on one than on another."⁶³

Under the influence of the Vedic concept of Varnashram Dharma, Gandhi likened the four Varnas to four limbs of the body of which none is superior or inferior. As sound health of each part of the body is essential for a perfect body, balanced

development of all the four classes of a society is equally important for a perfect society. Any attempt to prop up the concept of class superiority will cut the very root of a healthy society. Hence Gandhi said : "Even so our body politics, the body humanity would go to pieces if it were to perpetuate the canker of superiority or inferiority."⁶⁴

Gandhi did not regard a true Brahmin as superior in social hierarchy to a true Shudra and the practice of untouchability was not only considered by him a cancerous growth that was eating into the vitals of the Hindu Society; he cautioned the society against such practices. Accordingly he observed : "Untouchability is as I have already called it or described it an excrescence upon Varnashram. It is a weedy growth fit only to be weeded out as we weed out the weeds that we see growing in wheat fields or rice fields."⁶⁵

Hence whereas Marx realised that the society was divided on the basis of economic interests into two antagonistic groups, the haves and the have-nots and the bourgeoisie and the Proletariat, the class conflict was primarily economic in origin, and an egalitarian society can be planned and established by cutting the roots of economic disparity and by reorganising the economic system. Gandhi felt that the Indian society apart from being divided between the rich and the poor was also divided between the caste Hindus and the Untouchables and much of the social strife and class conflict of his days were due to caste tensions between the Caste Hindus and the Untouchables. Unless there is social integration and complete assimilation of the untouchables in the Hindu society as an integral part of the social system and the forging in of a single social entity, a mere egalitarian reorganisation of the economy may not be able to remove the stumbling blocks before the attainment of an egalitarian society. Rather he felt that in the face of a rigid and impregnable caste system and practice of untouchability, with inter-mixing, inter-dining and inter-marriage between the upper and the lower castes inconceivable and the Sudras or the fourth and the lowest class in the social hierarchy being treated as untouchables, an egalitarian society or socialism will be a mirage even after the elimination of all economic disparities. Hence as a socialist*strategist, Gandhi believed that in the Indian context, simple tinkering with

economic problems leaving the social problems and particularly the problem of untouchability untouched will not touch the fringe of the problem of engendering an egalitarian society, a society founded on fraternity and human fellowship. On the other hand much of the social strifes, class-conflicts and problems of an inegalitarian society of Indian variety can be alleviated by bridging the gap that divides the untouchables from the caste Hindus, by elevating the former to the level of the latter in the social scale and by effecting an integration of both. Accordingly he staked his life to protest against the policy of separate electorates of the British Government and said : "What I am living for and what I should delight in dying for is the eradication of untouchability root and branch . . . It is to achieve this, the dreams of my life for the past fifty years, that I have entered today the fiery gates."⁶⁶ Hence Gandhi considered eradication of untouchability and social equality of Caste Hindus and Harijans as matters of gravest urgency for the sake of the establishment of an egalitarian society.⁶⁷

Since Gandhi was in the habit of experimenting with his convictions, whether in South Africa or in India, his Ashrams were veritable colonies for social integration and social harmony. The inclusion of an untouchable family in his Sabarmati Ashram had unleashed a tempest in the Ashram; yet it could not restrain his policy of social integration and he adopted an untouchable girl Luxmi as his daughter. Gandhi's passion for social equality, social integration and assimilation of the untouchables was so powerful that he called himself an untouchable although a Caste Hindu by birth.⁶⁸ As C. F. Andrews has written : "When Mr. Gandhi was released from jail, he devoted himself specially to the cause of the untouchables and launched his weekly paper *Harijan*, meaning 'Children of God', which was the new name he coined for the untouchables. To him the removal of their social disabilities mattered far more than any reform that might increase their political power."⁶⁹

After he withdrew from the Congress he devoted the major part of his time in propagating the idea of abolition of untouchability, assimilation of the untouchables with the society of the Caste Hindus and complete social integration embracing the Caste Hindus and the untouchables as equal partners of the Indian society. To the chagrin of Rabindranath Tagore he

considered the Bihar earthquake as a Divine punishment meted out to the people of Bihar for their sin of untouchability. When he opposed the Minority Pact and the Depressed Class demand for separate electorate his argument was that the cleavage in the Hindu society that had been caused by the existence of caste system and practice of untouchability shall be perpetuated thereby and social integration shall be a lost cause. As he said : "Will untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity ? I would for rather that Hinduism died than that untouchability lived. I will not bargain away their rights for the kingdom of the whole world."⁷⁰

Thus Caste Hindus and the untouchables must constitute a single integrated community and social equality must be made to prevail in order that an egalitarian society of Gandhian conception shall attain its real significance. "The bhangi is or should be on a par with the Brahmin" said Gandhi "in all social relations." Different classes of people or people belonging to different varnas should be treated as members of a single Indian family or human family or branches of a single tree, and the canker of untouchability that was perpetrating an artificial barrier between man and man must be eradicated so that the path may be paved for social equality, the very cornerstone of Gandhian socialism. Accordingly he said : "When untouchability is rooted out these distinctions will vanish and no one will consider himself superior to any other. Naturally exploitation too will cease and cooperation will be the order of the day."⁷¹

During the last part of his life Gandhi not only preached abolition of untouchability to effect social integration; he also lived in Harijan quarters in Bombay and Delhi. For the sake of social integration and social equality, assimilation of the untouchables with the society, and making them equal partners of the Caste Hindus in the social framework, he felt that levelling up of the untouchables on the one hand and levelling down of the status of the Caste Hindus on the other are equally essential. The Caste Hindus for the sake of the same must perform the duties till today performed by the untouchables. Accordingly Gandhi recommended : "The least expiation that we can make is to share with the Harijans their disabilities and to deny ourselves the privileges which the latter cannot

share.”⁷² An experimenter with truth himself, he said : “If I have to be reborn I should be reborn an untouchable so that I may share their sorrow, sufferings and the affronts levelled against them in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from their miserable conditions.”⁷³

Thus Gandhian socialism hinges as much on social equality and integration of all social groups in the broad framework of the society as on economic equality. His emphasis on social integration, and group and class harmony is a distinctive feature of his socialism.

(d) Socialism and Sarvodaya

Western socialism is essentially a class philosophy. Although it is a vision of rationalistic restructuring of society with the ultimate objective of elimination of class division and emergence of an integrated society devoid of class stratification or a classless society, it is primarily concerned with the improvement of the lot of the class of the poor, the proletariat, the underdogs, the socially oppressed, the economically degenerated and the lost. If it preaches the philosophy of equality, it pitches its ambition high on the elevation of the status of the poor, the exploited, and the down-trodden, to the level of the rich, the prosperous and the privileged, in the society thereby bringing about a state of equality. If it aspires for the attainment of a state of fraternity and fellowship, it has in view forging in of a bond of comradeship between the poor and the oppressed and the prosperous and the privileged. Hence all socialists whether Utopian or Scientific, are basically champions of the cause of a class, the class of the oppressed. The Scientific Socialists like Marx and Engels while aspiring for a society “in which free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” not only directed their appeal at the working class of all countries to unite; they did not bother even if such unity of the working class would lead to the trembling, tottering and toppling of the privileged class and were not even hesitant to prescribe forcible deprivation of such class of their privileges and their complete liquidation. It is no doubt true that the Western socialists are concerned with the emancipation of the majority of the society—in a privilege-ridden pre-socialist society, the privileged are in a minority and the under-privileged

constitute the majority—all the same they are concerned with the emancipation of the lot of a class and not of the whole society. Hence Western socialism is primarily a class affair and a class philosophy.

Besides, western socialism is primarily concerned with the economic emancipation of the class of the under-privileged and the underdogs. Even if the ultimate objective is ethical i.e., creation of a saner society devoid of exploitation and erected on lofty human values like equality, fraternity, and fellowship, the approach is economic. Economic emancipation of the underdogs constitutes the core of Utopian and Scientific Socialism. Robert Owen, Saint Simon, or Charles Fourier, inspite of their vision of ethical restructuring of the society were primarily concerned with the improvement of the economic lot of the underdogs, although they were upset with the distressing consequences of the bourgeois economy. As far as Marx was concerned, he was not only tormented at the sight of economic exploitation of the Proletariat; he cherished their release from economic thralldom. Accordingly Marx's 10-Point Programme for the Proletarian revolution has an economic or materialistic overtone.

Gandhian socialism that culminates in Sarvodaya, on the other hand, is not a class philosophy but a social philosophy in the strict sense of the term. It not only pictures improvement of the lot of the poor, the down-trodden, the exploited and the lost; it is a scheme of social reconstruction that encompasses the emancipation or upliftment of all in the society or the welfare of all. As he felt "the only real dignified human doctrine is the greatest good of all"⁷⁴. It does not distinguish between the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots, the privileged and the under-privileged. Because he subscribed to a comprehensive, and integral view of the society and the social good, his concept of Sarvodaya comprehends the good of all, and the happiness of all individuals. Since he was a votary of ahimsa and universal love and would not only not advocate physical injury on any living being but also would desist from even thinking ill of others, his concept of Sarvodaya or the vision of a socialist society envisions the welfare of all. Even the concept of welfare or the good of the majority or even ninety-nine percent of the people was not acceptable to him.

As Gandhi said : "A votary of Ahimsa cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula (of the greatest good of the greatest number). He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realise the ideal."⁷⁵

Here the question may arise, will the concept of "welfare of all" as comprehended by the Gandhian ideal of Sarvodaya serve the socialist objective ? Will it help the realisation of the socialist ideal of equality, fraternity and fellowship ? Emancipation of the economically unfortunate, the down-trodden and the underdogs is no doubt in conformity with the socialist ideal. The lame and the incapacitated, the blind and the deaf, and the socially degraded, no doubt need upliftment for the sake of ushering in of an egalitarian society; but if Sarvodaya comprehends the welfare of the rich, the prosperous and the privileged, how can it promote the egalitarian objective ? Since in common parlance welfare consists in material welfare, any welfare of the richer section of the society, will mean also accumulation of more riches by them. Does it mean that under the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya, the rich shall be allowed to enjoy more privileges ? If such a view of welfare of the rich and the privileged is accepted, it shall compromise the very spirit of socialism since disparity between the rich and the poor and the dichotomy of poverty and privilege that constitute the very anti-thesis of socialism may not only persist but may even be accentuated. Besides, since the rich cannot acquire more riches except by way of exploiting the poor or depriving the latter of their dues, if such view of welfare of the rich is accepted, the socialist objective of fraternity and fellowship shall stand defeated.

Hence apart from the objective of "welfare of all", the nature of welfare as conceived by the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya should also be understood in its proper perspective. Although Gandhi as a champion of the cause of the underdogs or the Daridranarayan advocated their economic emancipation, material improvement did not constitute the real index of his concept of progress. As a matter of fact economic progress in the sense of materialistic craze was considered by him as "antagonistic to real progress" and a "fall from the ideal". Hence when he conceived the "welfare of all" he comprehended it—as against the western notion of welfare—in

terms of a balanced or all-round development of all the individuals that encompasses as much moral, ethical and spiritual development as material development. Thus Sarvodaya ideal of Gandhi not only conveys the idea of "welfare of all" but also the concept of balanced and all-round development of all or "all-welfare" of all individuals that has a spiritual and ethical overtone.

Hence when Gandhian socialism or Sarvodaya comprehends "the welfare of all" that embraces the welfare of the rich and the privileged, the emphasis here is not on the material enrichment of the rich men, but the promotion of their ethical, moral and spiritual enrichment so that their balanced, integrated and all-round development will be possible.

Gandhi while advocating Sarvodaya or the "welfare of all" had in his mind that in an acquisitive and non-egalitarian society both the rich and the poor lead a depraved life—the rich because of their practice of exploitation and material affluence, lead a life of indulgence devoid of its moral and ethical counterpart, and the poor a debased life full of scarcity, uncertainty, wants and misery. As Vinoba Bhave has observed: "In this unfortunate world of ours we are all fallen, and every one needs to rise. The rich are fallen long since and the poor have not risen at all. The result is that both need to be uplifted."⁷⁸

Hence the emancipation of the rich is as much urgent as the emancipation of the poor. If the under dogs and the down-trodden are to be lifted from the debris of want, misery, misfortune and exploitation, the rich and the privileged are to be emancipated from the moral debris and ethical slums. If the economically unfortunate are to be elevated to a state of material self-sufficiency—if not affluence—the rich and the economically prosperous are in an emergent need of extension of a moral and ethical dimension to their material affluence so that, a balanced and integrated development of their personality will be possible.

Gandhi suggested that the rich can gain their moral and ethical stature and secure a balanced development of their personality by practising renunciation, surrendering their privileges, devoting their surplus wealth for the good of the community and acting as trustees of the society. If they pursue the objective of their all-round or balanced development and

add a moral ethical dimension to their material prosperity by renouncing their acquisitiveness and privileges and acting as trustees of their superfluous wealth on behalf of the society, it will naturally lead to the economic prosperity of the underdogs. Thereby the disparity between the rich and the poor may be considerably reduced and it may help the emergence of an egalitarian society.

Although Gandhi was not in favour of a craze for material progress, as a pragmatist, he realised that the removal of the misery of the underdogs and the under-privileged not only implied renunciation of privilege by the privileged classes and their sharing with the underdogs; there must be production of more riches so that economic minimum can be ensured to all. But production of riches requires certain knack and tact that all do not possess in equal measure. Therefore the services of those who have the knack of producing wealth by honest means can be garnered for the purpose of multiplication of wealth which may be equally or equitably distributed among the members of the society. Hence as a pragmatist and a practical socialist, instead of advocating killing of the geese that lay golden eggs—the rich, the capitalist, and the privileged class—he wanted their domestication so that they may be made use of for the realisation of the objective of a socialist society. But the technique he devised for the same is Sarvodaya or the “welfare of all” that embraces the all-round welfare of the rich, the privileged and the capitalists along with the welfare of the poor and the down-trodden. By advocating the ideal of Sarvodaya he desired to tag the privileged class to the chariot of socialism. Thus as against the western notion of socialism the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya does not comprehend liquidation of any section of the community.

Hence unlike the western and particularly the Marxian concept, the Gandhian concept of socialism or Sarvodaya is not sectarian in nature. The core of Gandhian socialism is all-round welfare of all individuals instead of the welfare of a section of the community at the expense of the rest. Socialism according to Gandhi implies redemption both of the rich and the poor, the privileged and the under-privileged and the haves and the have-nots. By comprehending the welfare of all he felt that the socialist objective can be better furthered.

(e) Socialism and Non-Violence

Like all socialists Gandhi was inspired by the vision of an egalitarian society. He conceived of a society where the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and the employee shall occupy the same status. He also visualised that in such a society, each shall be assured his absolute minimum, distinction between quality of labour shall be extinguished and all shall be almost equally remunerated. From such a society the distinction between wealth and poverty and affluence and scarcity shall be banished and exploitation in any form shall be terminated. But the natural question is, how this end can be realised ?

The prophets of Scientific Socialism, Marx and Engels, made violence the causeway to socialism. According to them the capitalistic violence, the violence of the bourgeois system of economic exploitation and disparity, can be got rid of only through violence. They believed that the bourgeoisie, whose wealth, prosperity and privilege are inversely related to the pauperism of the millions, would scarcely be amenable to pressure other than violence and renounce their privileges upon which depended the improvement of the lot of the millions and the emergence of an egalitarian society. The Proletariat they believed cannot expect any redeeming measure from the legal, moral or religious systems of the bourgeois society, which are only "so many bourgeois prejudices behind which lurk, in ambush just as many bourgeois interest" and the government which is "but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie."⁷⁷ Violence according to them was therefore the only mid-wife and the fostering mother of socialism. Hence they advocated : "The violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of proletariat."⁷⁸

But Gandhi, an apostle of non-violence rejected outright violent technique for the attainment of socialism. Rejection of the violent technique for socialist transformation is not a speciality of Gandhi nor his original contribution. Even Bernstein the Marxist intellectual and socialist strategist, the Social Democrats of Germany the Fabian Socialists and the Democratic and Parliamentary socialists of different countries had renounced violent technique as an instrument of social change prior to Gandhi. But whereas their rejection of violent technique was

tactical and founded on their basic faith in the potency of democratic and Parliamentary apparatus to effect socialist change-over, Gandhi's rejection of violent technique was primarily a religious, ethical, moral and spiritual question and a matter of deep faith and profound conviction. As Jawaharlal Nehru has observed : "The most important thing he (Gandhi) insisted upon was the importance of means : ends were shaped by the means that led to them and therefore the means had to be good, pure and truthful."⁷⁹

A spiritual personality that he was Gandhi discovered an indissoluble bond between the end and the means i.e., the means for the attainment of the end should be as pure and honourable as the end itself. If the end is noble, Gandhi felt, the means must be equally noble as ignoble means may taint the end. As he said : "The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end, as there is between the seed and the tree."⁸⁰ If the seed of a noxious tree is planted, that will produce noxious plant which shall blossom into a noxious tree. None can expect to get a rose by planting a noxious tree.⁸¹ If socialism is a noble end, if it aspires to banish exploitation, poverty, deprivation and destitution of millions of semi-starved and semi-naked people, how can it be attained by the Marxian prescription i.e., by the application of ignoble means like accentuation of hatred and fomentation of class antagonism, class-war, violence and bloodshed ? Hence he said : "I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes".⁸²

Besides, as per Gandhi's own admission his socialism was a bye-product of his profound faith in non-violence. As he said : "My socialism was natural to me and not adopted from any books. It came out of my unshakable belief in non-violence. No man could be actively non-violent, and not rise against social injustice, no matter where it occurred."⁸³ Hence if means and ends are indissolubly bound up together, how can socialism that emanates from non-violence be attained by violence ? Hence Gandhi said : "Truth and Ahimsa must incarnate in socialism."⁸⁴

As already indicated earlier, Gandhi's socialist ideal resembles the ultimate communist ideal. As late as 1937 he said :

"What does communism mean in the last analysis ? It means a classless society, an ideal that is worth striving for."⁸⁵ While addressing a labour meeting that was disturbed by some young communists he claimed that he was championing the working man's cause long-before, most of the communists who tried to embarrass him were born.⁸⁶ Further he claimed : "I am trying my best to live upto the ideal of communism, in the best sense of the term."⁸⁷ In 1931 when a group of communists paid a visit to him, he assured them, "You will recognise that I am so to say a foundation member of your peasants and workers republic."⁸⁸ In the Constructive Workers Conference held at Madras in March 1946, Gandhi claimed to be "a foremost communist".⁸⁹ In his conversation with Louis Fischer, he indicated : "I call myself a communist too."⁹⁰ A few months later he said that he had many friends from among the communists, "Some of them are like sons to me."⁹¹ But all the same Gandhi was fundamentally opposed to the communist adherence to violent methods for the attainment of an egalitarian social order. Hence while he agreed with their egalitarian objective he said : "The idea of inequality, of 'high and low' is an evil but I do not believe in eradicating evil from the human breast at the point of the bayonet."⁹²

With his rejection of the violent method came his advocacy for the non-violent technique for the attainment of socialist objective. In place of coercion, he advocated application of the technique of conversion, Trusteeship, Satyagraha and non-violent non-cooperation to get rid of the capitalistic and inequalitarian evil.

Gandhi believed that although the capitalistic evil must go and accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few must be ended in order to pave the way for the emergence of an egalitarian society, it can well be secured by converting the capitalists and making them renounce their possessions and privileges for the sake of the community, thereby acting as catalytic agents of socialist transformation. He had profound faith in the capacity of man to rise above narrowness, selfishness greed and possessiveness and the capitalists were no exception to it. If the capitalists, the landlords, and the moneyed people are properly handled, if moral pressure is exerted on them, they may renounce their wealth and share them with the under-

privileged lot.

Hence, in place of violent technique to get rid of the prevailing disparity in the society, Gandhi advocated Trusteeship of the rich. The rich may still possess their wealth but may practise non-possession in their use. While still possessing the whole of their wealth, they may use only a fraction of it for the satisfaction of their basic needs, holding the rest on behalf of the society for utilisation for the good of the society. In suggesting a code of conduct for the Trustees Gandhi said : "I must know that all that wealth does not belong to me, what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community."⁹³

As a practical idealist Gandhi realised that inspite of the moral pressure exerted on them there may be some hard-nuts among the capitalists who may refuse to be cracked and may continue to hold on to their acquisitiveness and greed and selfish use of their possessions. Instead of acting as the "guardians of the poor" they may continue to exploit them. Gandhi a real revolutionary and an activist, devised a non-violent technique to meet the situation. Hence he said : "In trying to find the solution to this riddle I have lighted on non-violent non-cooperation and civil disobedience, as the right and infallible means."⁹⁴

Gandhi realised that no production and no wealth is possible without the cooperation of labour. Labour is as much necessary as capital or even more so, for any production. Even the exploitation of labour by the capitalists is inconceivable without the co-operation of labour. As he said : "The rich cannot accumulate wealth, without the co-operation of the poor in the society."⁹⁵ Hence if the capitalists and the privileged section of the society still hold on to their privileges and are hesitant to act as Trustees, non-violent non-cooperation may be used against them. The withdrawal of co-operation by the workers and the peasants from the productive system may paralyse production and sterilise accumulation of wealth. The privileged people may thereby be made to see reason and surrender their privileges and act as catalytic agents of socialist transformation.

Thus Gandhian socialism to distinguish it from the Scientific

Socialism of Marx and his followers may be termed as “non-violent socialism”.

(f) Socialism and Bread Labour

All the pre-socialist socio-economic systems are characterised by a broad class division based on the principle of non-performance of work or labour by a section of the community. The feudal or the bourgeois system of exploitation signifies that a section of people work whereas the other sections do not work and live on the labour of others. The feudalistic or the bourgeois privileges that form the hall-mark of the pre-socialist society, stand for the very negation of the idea of privilege being associated with work. Not only a section of people live without work; they enjoy more privileges than those who work. The value system of such a society is so oriented that premium is attached to life without work but addicted to idleness and enjoyments based on the exploitation of others. Those who live a leisurely life free from the obligation of work consider themselves as of a superior class, breathe an air of aristocracy and look down upon others who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow as menials. That perpetuates class distinction and perpetrates inequalitarian social order. An egalitarian society therefore presupposes equal liability of all to engage themselves in labour, in order to earn their living. It is held that enforcement of this principle of equal liability of all to work will bring about a drastic change in social values, create a breach in the artificial class barrier, and pave the way for an egalitarian social order. Hence the emphasis of the socialists is on the liability of each individual to work in order to qualify himself for his livelihood.

The manifesto of the Communist Party accepted “Equal liability of all to labour”,⁹⁶ as one of the 10 principal planks of the strategy for socialist transformation. The framers of the Constitution of U.S.S.R. recognised this obligation of equal liability of each able-bodied individual to engage himself in some type of socially useful work as one of the cardinal principles of socialism. Accordingly Article 17 of the Constitution reads : “The principle applied in the U.S.S.R. is that of socialism ‘From each according to his ability to each according to his work’.”⁹⁷ As it further reads: “He who does

not work neither shall he eat.”⁹⁸ Thus the socialists of Soviet Union recognise that for the sake of socialist transformation work by each able-bodied individual is an essential prerequisite.

Gandhi the socialist, who was as much zealous about removal of the misery of millions as other socialists, believed that by introducing the system of Bread Labour, by making labour obligatory for all and making one's bread a direct concomitant of one's labour, the cause of socialism shall be furthered. If the existing social distinction and class superiority is based on non-performance of labour and such non-performance of labour creates artificial class and social barriers—those doing manual work having been looked down upon and those living a life of parasitism depending upon the labour of others held in high-esteem—the simple remedy for effecting a transformation in favour of an egalitarian social structure is by way of making work the necessary condition of one's existence. Accordingly Gandhi said : “Invidious distinctions of rank would be abolished when every one without exception acknowledges the obligation of Bread Labour.”

Gandhi like Marx not only realised the mechanism of capitalists' profit; he realised too that the real cause of animosity of the labourers against the capitalists is the life of leisure of the latter devoid of necessary toil that creates a barrier between the capitalists and the labourers, the rich and the poor. If the privileged section of the society also engages itself in labour, much of the rigour of this animosity shall be neutralised. As Gandhi said : “There is a world-wide conflict between capital and labour, and the poor envy the rich. If all worked for their bread, distinctions of rank would be obliterated.”⁹⁹

Gandhi realised that since all were not working for the sake of earning their bread—some did not work at all but depended for their subsistence on the labour of others, upon the exploitation of others, or deprivation of those who worked, of their legitimate dues, those who worked, were made to work harder and for longer hours, and were deprived of their absolute minimum or a decent standard of life. That accentuated the misery of many in the society. If on the other hand all worked according to their capacity in order to earn their bread, the artificial class barrier between the privileged and the under-privileged, the master and the worker, the employer and the

employee, shall be eradicated and an egalitarian society shall be ushered in. Hence Gandhi writes : "If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be enough food and enough leisure for all. Then there would be no cry of over-population, no disease and no such misery as we see around. There will then be no rich and no poor, none high and none low, no touchable and no untouchable."¹⁰⁰

The society in which we live—the inegalitarian society and the pre-socialistic society—not only attaches premium to idleness and exploitation by way of according higher social status and dignity to those who indulge in it; those who engage themselves in physical labour and productive operations suffer from penalties by way of being given lower wages as compared to those who engage themselves in intellectual labour. Even in the communist countries that claim to be more perfectly socialist, intellectual labour is treated as superior to manual labour. For example, whether in Soviet Union or in Communist China, professors, scientists, doctors etc. draw higher remuneration for their work. In China a doctor or a professor gets wages rising to as much as Y 300 a month whereas the maximum wage that a plant manager gets is at best Y 150 a month.¹⁰¹

But Gandhi, while prescribing that for the emergence of an egalitarian society, all must engage themselves in labour or perform some work for the sake of earning their bread, had in his mind that the labour must necessarily be physical labour or manual labour. Literally speaking bread cannot be produced by work at the desk and only farm activities that involve physical labour or manual work are capable of producing bread, or articles out of which bread can be produced. Hence explaining the notion of Bread Labour, Gandhi writes : "It means that every one is expected to perform sufficient body labour in order to entitle him to it."¹⁰² He categorically discounted that performance of intellectual labour shall entitle anybody to lay his claim on his quota of bread for subsistence and said : "The need of the body must be supplied by the body."¹⁰³ Thus manual labour is the only passport for earning one's livelihood and constitutes the right type of Bread Labour. Gandhi therefore advocated that those in the society who are engaged in intellectual labour i.e., doctors, lawyers or teachers

should not demand any payment for such intellectual labour and must perform some amount of manual labour to justify their claim for livelihood. Such preference for manual labour will necessarily elevate the status of the manual labourers and bridge the gap that divides the society into two hostile camps of the leisured class and the workers. This according to Gandhi is a sure technique for the elimination of artificial class barrier and emergence of an egalitarian society. As Gandhi writes : "Mere mental, that is, intellectual labour is for the soul and is its own satisfaction. It should never demand payments. In the ideal state, doctors, lawyers and the like, will work solely for the benefit of the society, not for self. Obedience to the law of bread labour will bring about a silent revolution in the structure of society."¹⁰⁴

Thus Bread Labour is one of the original and distinctive contributions of Gandhi to the realm of socialist thought.

(g) Socialism and Trusteeship

One very significant contribution of Gandhi to the armoury of socialist strategy, is the concept of Trusteeship of the rich or the privileged section of the society. It follows as a direct corollary of the Gandhian notion of non-violent socialism.

Socialism as referred to earlier consists in the elimination of distinctions between the haves and the have-nots and between privilege on the one hand and poverty on the other. But Gandhi the apostle of non-violence, who rejected outright the Marxian technique of fomentation of class antagonism, class-conflict, violent civil-war and overthrow and complete liquidation of the privileged class, devised this technique of Trusteeship that is strictly in consonance with his overall philosophy of non-violence and the non-violent technique, for socialist transformation. Under this scheme the privileged section of the society while still in possession of their entire wealth shall spend only that portion of the wealth for themselves as are essentially required for satisfying their basic needs or honourable livelihood and hold the rest of their wealth as Trustees on behalf of the society. If the propertied people hold the superfluous wealth on behalf of the society as its custodian and spend it for the benefit of society, an egalitarian society shall be automatically ushered in without violence or bloodshed. Hence as Gandhi said : "How equal distribution

can be brought about through non-violence ? Indeed at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of the trusteeship of the wealthy for the superfluous wealth possessed by them.”¹⁰⁵

Gandhi was of opinion that the bounties of nature were meant not for its monopolisation by a few at the expense of others, but for their utilisation by the entire community for social good. Hence none had a right to acquire out of the gifts of nature more than what is needed for satisfying one's essential needs. Neither one's superior mental or physical ability, nor one's parentage or accident of birth, entitles one, to enjoy more than his absolute minimum. As Gandhi said : “Supposing I have come by a fair amount of wealth either by way of legacy or by means of trade or industry, I must know that all that wealth does not belong to me; what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community.”¹⁰⁶

Thus Gandhi realised that if it will dawn upon the propertied classes that they have no title to amass more wealth than their neighbours and if they treat the superfluous wealth that they possess either by virtue of their superior physical ability or intellectual vigour or by way of legacy, as the property of the community and themselves as their custodians or Trustees to act on behalf of the society, the rigour of the inegalitarian society shall be evened out and the path to socialism shall be duly paved. Gandhi has himself given expression to the view, that such theory of Trusteeship as an instrument of socialist transformation was devised by him as a counterweight to the Marxian technique of violence and all the paraphernalia associated with it. As he said : “I enunciated this theory, when the socialist theory was placed before the country in respect of the possessions held by Zamindars and ruling chiefs. They would do away with these privileged classes. I want them to outgrow their greed and sense of possession and to come down inspite of their wealth to the level of those who earn their bread by labour.”¹⁰⁷

But here the question may arise whether it shall ever dawn upon the propertied classes who are accustomed to enjoy

privilege, that they are the trustees of the country's wealth and have a duty to spend only the absolute minimum out of their possession for their own sake and hold the rest for the good of the society. Is it a realistic proposition to expect that the propertied class shall ever outgrow its greed and sense of possession? Even Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao who is "in favour of integrating the mechanism of trusteeship into the general machinery and framework of a socialist society" expressed his apprehension: "What I cannot accept is that a socialist society can be built up solely on the machinery of trusteeship in its truest form."¹⁰⁸

Yet Gandhi did never consider Trusteeship as an impractical and impracticable proposition or a 'legal fiction'.¹⁰⁹ That the members of the propertied class can act as trustees on behalf of the society, Gandhi had no apprehension about it. His profound faith in man prompted him to repose his confidence on the propertied class that will renounce its privileges and act as the trustee of its superfluous wealth on behalf of the society. As he felt, although the capitalists, the moneyed men, and the propertied and the privileged classes are basically acquisitive in nature, are deeply steeped in self-interest and adopt a policy of self-aggrandisement, when carefully handled, they may rise to the occasion, renounce their greed and selfishness, uphold the interest of the society, sacrifice their own comforts, luxuries, and even possession for the sake of communal welfare, and act with the spirit of trustees. Gandhi an apostle of non-violence believed that such faith in the reformability of man is an aspect of his theory of positive non-violence or love for fellow beings and carried to its logical conclusion, it shall lead to the theory of trusteeship. Hence as already referred to earlier Gandhi said: "In the application of the method of non-violence, one must believe in the possibility of every person, however depraved, being reformed under humane and skilled treatment. We must appeal to the good in human beings and expect response."¹¹⁰

As a pragmatist, Gandhi of course recognised that all the capitalists or the members of the propertied class may not respond to such moral stimuli or persuasion equally 'passionately, immediately renounce their privileges, and act as trustees; yet if the technique of moral pressure, persuasion and conversion

is used against them it shall act as a more effective instrument for initiating socialist transformation than any other technique. Accordingly Gandhi said : "Absolute Trusteeship is an abstraction like Euclid's definition of a point and is equally unattainable. But if we strive for it, we shall be able to go further in realising a state of equality on earth than by any other method."¹¹¹

As Shriman Narayan has observed : "Gandhiji only wished to give one more chance to the owning class to reform itself in the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption."¹¹² But a pragmatist, Gandhi realised that there may be some among the capitalists and the privileged class of the society who inspite of all attempts at converting them may not yield to the moral influence, resist all attempts at converting them and refuse to develop the spirit of trustees. Gandhi the apostle of non-violence who treated Trusteeship as an alternative to violent technique for socialist transformation, thought of a course of action to effect this change over in favour of Trusteeship of the rich that is less pernicious than violent technique but more effective than the method of conversion, under such special circumstances. Hence he switched on to the technique of Statutory Trusteeship or Trusteeship brought about with the help of statutes or legislative enactments.

But even while thinking of statutory trusteeship or trusteeship through legislative enactment, Gandhi did not overlook the danger of associating the state with this act of legislation since he was all along conscious of the violent nature of the state. Hence the statutory trusteeship that he contemplated is one that shall be a product of legislation enacted by Gram Panchayats that are democratically constituted with people at the helm of affairs. As Gandhi said : "All the capitalists will have an opportunity of becoming statutory trustees. But such a statute will not be imposed from above. It will have to come from below. When the people understand the implications of trusteeship and the atmosphere is ripe for it, the people themselves, beginning with Gram Panchayats will begin to introduce such statutes. Such a thing coming from below is easy to swallow, coming from above it is liable to prove a dead weight."¹¹³

The question naturally arises if the Trustees shall obtain

fulfilment of their absolute need, out of their wealth, to what extent shall their needs be fulfilled and what shall be treated as their absolute need? As Gandhi felt, in the egalitarian society of his conception, every one must have a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one's children and adequate medical relief. As per his prescription the Trustee shall not have anything more than his neighbour and hence he said, "according to the doctrine, they may not possess a rupee more than their neighbours."¹¹⁴ Interpreted in terms of commodities and services the trustees therefore shall be entitled only to have their absolute minimum in form of balanced diet, a decent house to live in, medical care of their family members and education of their children and no more.

In case of Statutory Trusteeship, where the remuneration of the Trustees shall be regulated by Statutes, the quantum of such remuneration shall be directly related to the services rendered by the trustee to the society. Hence as he said: "The State would regulate the rate of commission which they would get commensurate with the service rendered and its value to society."¹¹⁵ But in no case Gandhi was prepared to concede to the Trustees more than 25% of their entire wealth in form of their commission.¹¹⁶

In Gandhi's view this trusteeship is not inheritable in the sense that the children of the trustees shall inherit their fathers as trustees. Trusteeship is not a right but a duty which can be assigned to those who have the requisite qualification i.e., who can live a dedicated life inspired by a sense of social responsibility and while living on absolute minimum, have a mental makeup to devote their surplus earnings legitimately earned for the good of the community. If the child of a Trustee has such qualification he may inherit his father as a trustee; but he need not necessarily inherit his father in the capacity of a trustee. As he said: "Their children would inherit the stewardship only if they proved their fitness for it."¹¹⁷

Many critics have raised their eyebrows if socialism can ever be conceivable with the capitalists and the propertied classes still in possession of their wealth and possessions. As K. G. Mashruwala has observed: "Some people think that it is just a euphemistic way of justifying one's possession and control of property, power etc."¹¹⁸ But Gandhi felt that the Trustee-

ship system is a more effective system for bringing about socialist transformation, consistent with economic prosperity, than violent method. He wanted to tame the capitalists, the wealthy and the propertied class, and make use of their knack and tact for manufacturing wealth by legitimate means, so that wealth is increased and the increased wealth is catered to the needs of an egalitarian society. As Gandhi has written : "Violent action cannot benefit society. Society will be the poorer for it will lose the gifts of a man who knows how to accumulate wealth." Hence he switched on to the technique that keeps intact the propertied class and makes use of their talents for effecting the changeover. This he considered as more effective than the violent technique of completely liquidating them. As Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao has observed : "Gandhi's doctrine of trusteeship was the only possible answer to the problem of recurring inequalities, assuming of course that it could be implemented in practice."¹⁹

(b) State and Gandhian Socialism

Socialists in respect of their attitude to the State may be broadly divided into three categories : (a) those who are critical of the very nature and functions of the state and desire its substitution by voluntary groups or associations ensuring freedom of the individuals as producers and consumers, (b) those who want its retention but transformation of its character so as to enable it to serve the real socialist objective, and (c) those who are critical of the state and advocate its withering away but once they seize the political machine, make the state the centre of all political activities and the centre of all powers. The Guild Socialists, the Syndicalists and St. Simonians belong to the first category, the Democratic Socialists, the Fabians, and Lassalle and Lassallites belong to the second, whereas the Scientific Socialists like Lenin and Stalin subscribe to the third view. The Guild Socialists, Syndicalists and other community-builders like Saint Simon are gradually getting extinct, the Fabians have become a spent force, and the Democratic Socialists are vying with the Marxian Scientific Socialists to make the state all pervasive and the final arbiter of the destiny of man in the society. But Gandhi as a socialist not only looked at the state with suspicion and distrust and

wanted its elimination in an ideal stage of human society in the long run; he also provides a blue-print for a radical diminution of its powers and dignity even in the immediate present, and near future, through the creation of a decentralised political and economic order in place of a totalitarian state system.

The modern version of Marxian socialism with which Gandhian socialism is contrasted, while treating the state as an instrument of class oppression used by the bourgeoisie against the proletariat and the economic under-dogs, and advocating its withering away, through the back door, make the state, after seizure of power by the proletariat, the only entity enjoying absolute power, enormous privilege and unparalleled status. As it is evident from the Soviet and other communist experiments, the state that is tolerated as a stop-gap arrangement, as an instrument wielded by the proletariat during the transitional period intervening between the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of a communist society – consolidates its position and prestige and emerges as a grand colossus. Not only the state owns, runs and manages all the economic enterprises in the state, plans the processes of production, distribution, and exchange, and determines the nature, quantity, and quality of production, and a manner of distribution or exchange; it pervades the entire social behaviour of the individual, and deeply influences their individual choice and preferences, likes or dislikes, recreations and hobbies. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat that takes the place of the bourgeois democracy and makes the lofty claim of being a more perfected form of democracy than the one it has replaced, makes the state a super-organism. The state with the help of such dictatorial regime not only tortures and oppresses the remnants of the bourgeoisie on whose liquidation, it is believed, lies the cornerstone of the socialist structure; it tortures like its predecessor state the bulk of the society. Not only it is a regimented society in the sense that economic and political life of the nation is strictly controlled, and personal freedom and individual liberty are conspicuous by their absence; under such a state system, "There will always be liberty tomorrow but never today."¹²⁰ As it has been further observed : "Hundreds and thousands are thrown into prison, over every one there hangs the restless fear of the spy, the dread of the secret police. Friendship is dangerous. Family

life is poisoned. Suicide is wisdom. What limit is there to the cruelty, the savage senseless cruelty, of man to man ?”¹²¹ It is not possible to conceive of a socialist society—a state of equality, fraternity freedom and fellowship, under a system, where violence reigns supreme and fear is the order of the day.

The state not having been content with regimentation of economic and political life, and the outward behaviour of man and the physical persecution of dissenters, gets into their inner life, regiments their mental processes and perpetrates what Milovan Djilas says, “Tyranny over the mind.” Free and full blossoming of the mind and their unrestrained development become impossible of attainment. Under such a system as Djilas has observed : “It is understandable that the greatest minds have lost their direction faith and power. Suicide, despair, alcoholism and debauchery, the loss of internal powers and integrity, because the artist is forced to lie to himself and others – these are the most frequent phenomena in the communist system among those who wish to and are able to create something new.”¹²²

If the state penetrates into every aspect of individual and social life, it simply stifles the onward development of man and mitigates the ultimate socialist objective of “free development of each”. Man cannot for all time to come be persuaded to make sacrifices in terms of human freedom and dignity and embrace a state of mental and moral slavery in the hope of a doubtful future. Besides, if the life at present is so much intolerable, how can it hold out the prospects of a rosy future ?

Of course the defenders of the system of all pervasiveness of state functions and powers take the plea that the absolute and all powerful state is a temporary phase that will pave the way for its own decline, prepare the ground for its own withering away, and lay the foundation of a class-less society. But that still remains a pious wish and the vision recedes, as is evident from the Soviet Union, after about six decades of the Revolution. This concentration of power in the hands of the State instead of leading to a class-less society, creates a class dominated society presided over, according to Milovan Djilas, by a “New Class” consisting of “the bureaucracy or more accurately the political bureaucracy”. This “New Class” of Party, Political or managerial bureaucracy, while perpetuating

its own predominance in all possible ways, relegates to the background the sublime socialist ideal of welfare of the community or the "free development of all". As Djilas has observed : "It did not come to power to complete a new economic order but to establish its own and in so doing to establish its own power over society."¹²³

Hence E.F.M. Durbin's remark about dictatorship of the proletariat is true of the totalitarian states in general. He observed : "They may be able to construct ambitious road systems or drains, the Pontine marshes, or drive canals across a continent, or afforest the Central Asian deserts or build an immense fleet of bombing aeroplanes. But the one thing they cannot do without which all the other achievements may become dust and ashes, in the mouths of ordinary men and women is to establish emotional security or social justice."¹²⁴

Gandhi who dreaded the state power as a plague, as an ardent disciple of Thoreau not only considered that government as best that governs the least, but also that state as best that performs a minimum of functions. Although on his return to India in 1915 his political activities were confined to the Indian soil, except as it stretched up to the seat of the British Government, and he left the shore of India only once, during a period of over three decades of his activities, for participation in the Second Round Table Conference, he had an international perspective and a world-view. He had made a correct assessment of the ways the Soviet socialist state system was functioning although in conversation with Prof. Ranga he said, "I do not know what has happened in Soviet Union."¹²⁵ As a result, in his conversation with Louis Fischer prior to the commencement of the Quit India Movement he said : "Some say there is ruthlessness in Russia but that it is exercised for the lowest and the poorest and is good for that reason. For me, it has very little good in it. Some day this ruthlessness will create an anarchy worse than we have ever seen."¹²⁶

If the high hopes of the Scientific Socialists of the Soviet Union to create an egalitarian society stand shattered, it is because they aspire to build the super-structure of the socialist society on the rotten and tottering foundation of class-hatred, violence and liquidation of the privileged class whose downfall and complete extinction are considered as the very *sine qua non*

of an egalitarian society. If their voyage to the *El Dorado* of an egalitarian society has been shipwrecked it is because they started with a wrong chart and a defective Mariners' Compass i.e., fomentation of class hatred and application of violent technique respectively and it has consequently foundered on the unsafe rock of complete reliance on absolute state power. But the all-pervasive totalitarian state system that compromises the dignity of the individual and his freedom and throws to four winds all egalitarian and libertarian values, has been devised and mounted on the pedestal of pre-eminence by the Scientific Socialists as a direct corollary of their notion of socialist revolution and the nature of the reconstruction to be undertaken. The totalitarian state that has been super-imposed on the tomb of the bourgeois society and the bourgeois state derives its rationale from the need for violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the assumption of counter-revolution it shall whip up and the assumed need of a super-state to liquidate the remnants of the bourgeoisie and their counter-revolution. Besides, their notion of economic reconstruction for the sake of socialist transformation and particularly concentration of ownership and management of the means of production, distribution and exchange brought into being a dinosaur state.

Gandhi realised all these and accordingly when he thought of socialism, communism or an egalitarian society, he thought in terms of diminution of the powers of the state and decentralisation of its political and economic authority. Hence in his interview with Louis Fischer, portraying the picture of free India he said, "The centre of power now is in New Delhi or in Calcutta and Bombay, in the big cities. I would have it distributed among the seven hundred thousand villages in India. That will mean that there is no power."¹²⁷

The Gandhian concept of socialism or Sarvodaya that proceeds with the fundamental notion of "welfare of all" or emancipation of all economic and social classes and groups, their assimilation in the social frame-work and promotion of the individuality and human dignity of all, cuts the root of a totalitarian state. Since violent revolution and liquidation of the bourgeoisie are ruled out from the beginning, the question of counter-revolution of the bourgeoisie does not arise and the need for a authoritarian and a totalitarian state becomes

superfluous.

Besides, since Gandhi dreaded the authority of the state and was aware how concentration of power in the hands of the state facilitates abuse and misuse of such power for promoting sectarian ends, he prepared a detailed blue-print for the decentralisation of political and economic authority. The emphasis in his system is on decentralised smaller village communities or societies as the basic units of power and authority of the socialist society. Accordingly he said : "Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained, and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world."¹²⁸

Thus the ideal type of political and economic organisation of the Socialist community shall proceed from a system of economically self-sufficient and politically self-governing villages, autonomous, but impelled by the societarian motive to sacrifice its interest for the greater good of the society. As he said : "In this structure composed of innumerable villages there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals never aggressive, in their arrogance, but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units."¹²⁹

Here is the picture of a decentralised political and economic system combined with an integrated and coherent social framework. Such a system on the one hand makes the totalitarian state superfluous and on the other, ensures enjoyment by the individuals of unrestrained, but socially conditioned freedom and thus holds a better prospect for the emergence of an egalitarian society based on supreme human values life freedom, equality, fraternity and fellowship. As Wilfred Wellock has observed, according to Gandhi, "The basis of national life should be the small community, such as the village and the small market town. Only in such societies, where politics are local and vital, since they have to do with the organisation of the

local economic life, can there be real political and economic freedom and full personal responsibility.”¹³⁰ Thus in the socialist system of Gandhi the state is dethroned from the high pedestal it is occupying in other socialist systems and particularly in the socialist system of the Soviet Union.

To sum up, Gandhian socialist thought while subscribing to certain basic values held in common by all the socialists of all hues has certain features that distinguish it from the socialism of other varieties. Like all socialists, Utopian and Scientific, Gandhi made the egalitarian society his Pole Star and economic equality and equality of opportunity his Mariners' Compass on his voyage to the Socialist El Dorado. But as a pragmatist he believed that socialism of different countries need not resemble one another in all respects; instead they may vary from one another depending on the objective situations prevalent in the countries in question and may develop their own peculiar and special traits in consonance with the cultural tradition and heritage of the country. Accordingly his own socialist thought exhibits certain features that are peculiar and special, bear the stamp of Indian cultural tradition and heritage and the impress of his ethical, moral and spiritual personality. Hence his socialism lays as much stress on social equality as on economic equality that ultimately culminates in Sarvodaya or the all-round and balanced development of all individuals. A perfectionist who did not believe in the idea of compromise in respect of his principles he desired to attain the ultimate communist ideal through socialism and hence his socialism cannot be distinguished from communism. Instead of depending upon the violent technique for socialist transformation his socialism relies on the peaceful technique of persuasion and conversion and instead of advocating elimination of the privileged class it pins its faith on their transformation into trustees of the societal interests. He believed that the practice of Bread Labour or performance of manual labour by all will act as a potent instrument for egalitarian transformation of the society. His scheme of socio-economic reorganisation leading to an egalitarian society subordinates the state to a decentralised socio-economic order.

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CHAPTER 4

ENDS AND MEANS AND GANDHIAN SOCIALISM

The starting point and the terminus of all socialists irrespective of the school to which they belong are identical. Ideologically speaking socialism proceeds from the expression of their psychic obsession with the economic system that combines unparalleled prosperity of a few with abysmal poverty and appalling human misery of the millions. All of them aim at a golden age or a utopia wherefrom disparity in income, wealth, and economic power, shall be banished or equal opportunities for all shall prevail. They have an identical vision, of a saner, sober, and just society based on the rock of equality, fraternity, and fellow-feeling instead of one based on the shaky foundation of exploitation, inequality and grinding poverty that is the lot of many; yet the socialists of different hues and schools differ from one another broadly on the ground of the technique they adopt, or the means they employ, for opening the flood-gates to the socialist Utopia. Where does Gandhi stand in the socialist spectrum in respect of the choice of appropriate techniques for the attainment of socialist objective ?

TECHNIQUE OF UTOPIAN AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIALISTS

Broadly speaking socialists can be classified into two categories depending on the nature of the method or means they employ to attain the socialist El Dorado. The Scientific Socialists like Marx and Engels are distinguished from their forerunners whom they branded as Utopian socialists not only

by virtue of their concept of historical inevitability of socialism; another equally important distinguishing feature is their attitude towards the application of violent means for the attainment of the objective. The Utopian socialists like Saint Simon, Fourier and Robert Owen were impassioned socialists whose sense of compassion was stirred at the sight of abysmal poverty, destitution and deprivation of the many in face of unparalleled prosperity of a handful of the privileged and they aspired to solve the human problem in their own modest ways by tinkering with the then existing economic system. They were advocates of piece-meal reform instead of radical transformation of socio-economic fabric. They found sense and meaning in the application of the method of persuasion, appealing to the good sense of the emerging bourgeoisie and the co-operative effort of the workers or the proletariat. They were advocates of non-violence. As Marx and Engels have observed : "They reject all political and specially all revolutionary action; they wish to attain their ends by peaceful means, and endeavour by small experiments, necessarily doomed to failure and by the force of example to pave the way for the new social Gospel."¹

As Marx and Engels have further observed : "They still dream of experimental realisation of their social Utopias . . . duodecimo editions of the New Jerusalem 'through' appeal to the feelings and purses of the bourgeois."²

Although the Utopian socialists were conscious of the exploitation of the proletariat by the slowly emerging bourgeoisie, and aware of the real roots of the social malaise, they abstained from fomenting class-antagonism and class-hatred that may ultimately culminate in the upsurge of violence and overturning of the-then existing social system. They were cautious social strategists anxious for reform, yet not less anxious to retain the existing social-economic framework. They wanted not only to transform the nature of bourgeois economy but also to reform the bourgeoisie, thereby sublimating class antagonism. As the Communist Manifesto went ahead to comment, although they were "in many respects revolutionary" they endeavoured consistently "to deaden the class struggle and to reconcile the class antagonisms".³

The Scientific Socialists commencing from Marx onwards believe in a utopia; yet with the exception of Bernstein and his

school of social democracy all pin their faith in the application of the method of violence. The authors of the Communist Manifesto elaborated in categorical terms the nature of their utopia. "In place of the old bourgeois society with its classes and class-antagonism, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." Yet they anchored their faith on the rock of conflict, crisis and cataclysm. The bourgeois system of economy that is the very parent of exploitation and mass misery and that breeds inegalitarianism, and injustice was considered by them as beyond reform and its dissolution they felt is the very cornerstone of any future utopia. The system according to them is so palpably rotten that no social good, no egalitarian society and no social justice can emerge out of it. The bourgeois economic machine must be completely shattered, crushed wholesale, and the system overturned upside down, so as to pave the way for an egalitarian socio-economic order. Thus they had an apocalyptic vision, that comprehends tearing away of the fabric of bourgeois economy and society thread by thread reducing it to shreds before the linen of a new egalitarian and just society is woven. Social regeneration was thus conceived by them in the context of the upsurge of violence. Accordingly the Communist Manifesto goes on to say : "The Proletariat the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up without the whole superincumbent strata of official society being sprung into the air."⁴

Marx and Engels therefore were advocates of complete and wholesale change of the bourgeois socio-economic structure through the application of violence. There is no escape from the abuses of the bourgeois society and bourgeois economy unless the proletariat handles the weapon of violence. The society must suffer the birthpang before the socialist utopia is born. They prescribed that open revolution must break out "where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat."⁵ Socialist construction must follow destruction of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat must ruthlessly destroy, cold bloodedly, the entire bourgeois socio-economic relationship, bourgeois property, and bourgeois legal, moral and religious order. As they said, "Their mission is to destroy all previous securities for, and

insurance of, individual property.”⁶ Thus the temple of socialism must be constructed on the tomb of the bourgeoisie system. As Marx and Engels said about their plan and the plan of the Communists : “They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a communist revolution.”⁷

Thus although Marx and Engels were moved by ethical consideration for a just and morally defensible society, they least bothered about adoption of a morally sanctified means or method. They, during the subsequent years following the appearance of the Communist Manifesto, had witnessed the transformation that capitalism was undergoing and improvement effected in the condition of the working class; yet their faith in the application of violent method for socialist transformation did never wane. In their Preface to the German edition of 1872 the authors said : “However much the state of things may have altered during the last twenty-five years, the general principles laid down in the Manifesto are on the whole as correct to-day as ever.”⁸

Application of violent method or non-ethical means for the attainment of a noble objective like socialism is therefore an inalienable part of Marxian brand of Scientific Socialism. Not only violent means or method is condoned, it has been sanctified and given the seal of approval of the authors of Communist Manifesto as the legitimate and morally justifiable method. Hence as Jaya Prakash Narayan has very appropriately observed : “In Marxism any means are good means provided they serve the ends of the social revolution. Thus Marxism as a philosophy of action is a moral.”⁹

Lenin carried this tradition of violence still further. While Marx and Engels were primarily theoreticians elaborating the tactics for the Communists, Lenin played the role both of a theoretician and a strategist of the Bolshevik Revolution. Marxism was modified to suit the objective need of an industrially underdeveloped country on the threshold of economic revolution; yet instead of modifying the Marxian emphasis on the violent overthrow of the bourgeois socio-economic machine, added emphasis was placed on violence. While dilating on the distinction between abolition of the state as

state and “withering away” of the state, Lenin pointed out that whereas “proletarian state” established after the seizure of power by the Proletariat shall gradually wither away automatically, an end can be put to the bourgeois state as an engine of class oppression and instrument of perpetuation of the dichotomy of poverty and destitution for millions in face of affluence of a handful, only by the application of violent methods. As he said : “The suppression of the bourgeois state by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution.”¹⁰ Not only violent method was accorded moral sanction, he himself became, a party to violent overthrow of the Tsardom and an architect of the blood-bath that followed in its trail. Hence as it has been observed “Lenin viewed his world in kill or—be-killed terms—he who struck first and best would rule : the laggard would die.”¹¹

Although Marx talked in terms of violence and force as the fostering mother of the socialist revolution, the tactics of lies, and deceit, conspiracy and cold-blooded murder were never a part of his strategy. Lenin while giving the chief place to propaganda and organisation of workers for cultivating a class feeling among them and to endow them with a sense of militancy gave still higher place to craft, conspiracy and chicanery. As it has been observed : “His basic thought was to begin the retreat and as far as it turned out to be necessary to go on illegally.”¹² Hence it is absolutely correct to agree with Francis Coker : “The Communist program attaches more importance to conspiracy, intrigue and incitation to disorder as means both for disseminating socialist ideas and sentiments and for sapping the moral and practical foundations of the existing order.”¹³

Che Guevara, the architect of Guerrilla Warfare of Cuba publicly proclaimed the principles of secretiveness, treachery and surprise attacks as the essential elements of his revolutionary struggle against the Batista dictatorship. War was viewed as a struggle for success and recourse to tricks and stratagems were considered legitimate and morally defensible means to attain the goal. His aim was no doubt noble, “to establish a new society, to break the old moulds of the outdated, and to achieve, finally the social justice. . . .,”¹⁴ yet the strategy adopted by him, the technique of craft and cunning puts to shade the violent methods advocated by Marx and Engels and the strategy

of craft and chicanery prescribed by Lenin. Not only such strategy was recommended as a device to wrest success from the enemy, it has been bestowed with a type of dignity and nobility unheard of earlier. Speaking about his strategy Che Guevara said : "All these disparaged qualities acquire a true nobility, the nobility of the end at which they aim; and it becomes clear that we are not speaking of distorted means of reaching an end."¹⁵

Thus scientific socialists in the past and revolutionary socialists in modern times with the vision of a golden age, devoid of exploitation and disparity of income, wealth, economic power and privilege, have somehow not attached any importance to the nature and character, the quality and purity of the means to be adopted for the attainment of the objective. Although their emphasis differs they are unanimous in respect of the fact that a just, egalitarian and saner socio-economic order can emerge out of a pool of blood, and a reign of terror. While Marx and Engels not only condoned but prescribed violence as the grand strategy for socialist transformation, Lenin added to it a system of craft and cunning, hypocrisy and unscrupulousness and Che Guevara attributed a type of nobility to such methods. They had a profound faith that the nature of the means, its nobility or ignobility, purity or perversity, morality or immorality, have no relevance in the context of the ultimate objective. End justifies the means and if a just and morally defensible social order is the objective, the means, however ignoble, is morally defensible too. Once the revolution occurs the path is paved for an egalitarian society and all sins are washed away. Ethics for them is not absolute but relative and particularly socialist ethics can well adopt a double standard. Thus according to them only out of chaos, order shall emerge, out of dissolution and disintegration a new society shall take its birth.

But the nature of the means and method that the "Scientific Socialists" like Marx, Engels and Lenin and the ultra leftists like Che Guevara either recommended or adopted for the attainment of the socialist goal depended primarily upon the general nature of their philosophical outlook or their philosophy of life in general. For example the very fact that Marx condoned violent method as the vehicle for the attainment of a just and saner society is a reflection of his faith in the potency

of dialectic as a technique to explain the mystery surrounding the universe in general and the progress of human civilisation in particular. That all progress in history including the march of human civilisation is dependent on conflict or interplay of opposing or contradictory forces or in other words, that no progress is conceivable without conflict, is the crux of Marxian thought. Marx's general attitude to life's problems was so much coloured by this conviction that the first chapter of his Communist Manifesto opened with the wringing words, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle."¹⁶ The change-over from the primitive society to feudal society and from the feudal society to the bourgeois society have been effected according to Marx by conflicts between the warring groups. As the Communist Manifesto reads: "Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild master and journeyman in a word oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes."¹⁷ Thus according to Marx the contradictions of the bourgeois society can be resolved only by conflicts.

Marx's theory of conflict is once again grounded on two pillars i.e., materialism and antagonism, which determined the nature of his social philosophy and socialist strategy. Although Marx like his master, Hegel, was a German and he adopted the master's technique of social change—the dialectic—he gave the master's idea a materialistic tinge. History according to Hegel is the realisation of the "Absolute Idea", "Reason", "Freedom", 'God' the "World spirit". But Marx gave the dialectic a materialistic orientation. "To Hegel, the life process of the human brain i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of the Idea he even transforms into an independent subject is the demiurgos of the real world and the real world is only the external phenomenal form of 'the Idea'. With me on the contrary, the idea is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought."¹⁸ Thus as Marx claimed: "My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite."¹⁹ By giving a materialistic content to the Hegelian dialectic he

claimed to have given it its proper form. "With him it is standing on its head."²⁰ By adopting dialectical materialism as the technique to unravel the mystery of historical development he made dialectic as per his claim to stand on its feet.

The essence of dialectical materialism of Marx is that the moving spirit behind history and human civilisation is gross materialism. Material forces and material relationship are the only reality in the historical setting and social framework. Marx speaking about the bourgeois society said, "It . . . has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment'. It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation."²¹ Thus self-interest, economic calculation and materialistic considerations are the dominant considerations in the society. Moral considerations, idealistic calculation and supreme human virtues are values and considerations of ages and epochs that have gone by and have no validity today.

From this concept of naked materialism and sense of self-aggrandisement as conceived by Marx follows his concept of class antagonism that matures into and manifests itself in the mutual conflict of economic groups which in the pre-socialist society assumes the form of a conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat into which the society is divided. In every epoch of history the economically privileged classes tried to exploit the economically under-privileged classes, for their own self interest that foments class antagonism. Marx accordingly said: "Hitherto, every form of society has been based . . . on the antagonism of oppressing and oppressed classes."²² Thus this philosophy of antagonism which is rooted in materialism erupts in form of violent overthrow of the economically privileged group in the society. The violent proletarian revolution of Marx is therefore a necessary concomitant of his broader philosophy of dialectical development through conflict that stands on unsullied materialism and interminable antagonism.

Lenin apart from freely prescribing violent upsurge for the liberation of the proletariat went a step ahead in respect of revolutionary technique by giving a premium to craft and

cunning, secrecy and unscrupulousness, and fraud and chicanery. But apart from his overall adherence to Marxian concept of materialism, economic determinism, and class antagonism that culminates in class conflict, it can be attributed to his deadly seriousness about revolution, realisation of the need for organisation of a vanguard for effecting the revolution and the passion for laying down the strategy for a revolution in a country where the proletariat was organisationally weak and politically less conscious. Whereas Marx was mainly concerned with theorisations, Lenin was a strategist of revolution and he had learnt from experience through his subjection to imprisonment that the "monster" of a Tsar can be made to lick the dust, and defeat on the part of the proletariat can be avoided only when revolutionary strategy is well laid out. While making a plea for an organisation of professional revolutionaries, Lenin said : "Give us an organisation of revolutionaries, and we will overturn Russia"²³ Such organisation of professional revolutionaries must be nursed amidst secrecy and trained in the technique of conspiracy. Accordingly Lenin writes : "Secrecy is such a necessary condition for this kind of organisation that all the other conditions . . . must be made to conform to it. It would be extremely naive indeed, therefore to fear the charge that we Social Democrats desire to create a conspiratorial organisation."²⁴

Lenin who lived the life of a conspirator and planned out conspiracies, secretly escaped from country to country, hounded out of Russia by the Tsarist police, and even went into hiding when Provisional Government of 1917 sought the arrest of the Bolshevik leaders after the abortive Bolshevik uprising. He was anxious to live and anxious to see the proletarian revolution mature into a socialist society. His concern was therefore the right line of action for victory instead of a morally stout and justifiable method to wrest power.²⁵ After the Bolsheviks came to power in face of dangerous foes at home and formidable opposition of the international bourgeoisie, he treated any means as sacrosanct as the other. Since he viewed the struggle in "kill or be-killed" terms he felt that one must arm oneself "as well as possible against the foe and felt free to use any weapon available for the combat".²⁶

Che Guevara's revolutionary strategy is equally the reflection

of his whole philosophy of life and action. Even during his school days, on one occasion when his fellow students asked him to take to the streets in a political demonstration, he refused with the remark, "I'll go and demonstrate only if you give me a gun."²⁷ He exchanged his career as a doctor for that of a revolutionary and while he won a revolution, he lost his life in another revolution. Therefore it is not surprising that Che advocated tricks and stratagems, secrecy, fighting in the night that can facilitate escape, acts of terrorism and sabotage, blowing out of power plants, railway lines, and roads and thus paralyse, the industry and means of communication. As Che suggested : " 'Hit and run' some call it scornfully and this is accurate. Hit and run, wait, lie in ambush, again hit and run, and thus repeatedly, without giving any rest to the enemy."²⁸

Thus Che's advocacy of the technique of secrecy, tricks and sabotage for effecting a social revolution can be understood only in the context of his life as an impassioned revolutionary and a strategist for guerrilla warfare. Victory was his end, and means was subordinated to it. Adoption of means, moral or immoral, depended on the enemy's position and the possibility of success. Hence he was indifferent to the nature of the means, its purity or impurity, its morality or immorality. As Che writes : "As means tactics are much more variable much more flexible than the final objectives and they should be adjusted continually during the struggle. There are tactical objectives that remain constant throughout a war and others that vary. The first thing to be considered is the adjusting of guerrilla action to the action of the enemy."²⁹

Thus adoption of violent means for socialist transformation is a part of the general philosophical outlook of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Che Guevara. Their indifference to morally sanctified means and their condonation and free prescription of violent techniques and application of force, fraud, deceit, conspiracy and sabotage are simply the off-shoots of their peculiar philosophical outlook, their overall amoralism and their profound faith that an ideal, just and moral, can be attained by immoral means. This amoralistic approach is quite in tune with the materialistic and mundane overtone of their idealism. For them the end justifies the means and their ethical objective

of an egalitarian society devoid of exploitation can never be tainted or distorted or sullied or soiled by the application of morally indefensible methods. To them the nobility of the end endows the means, however ignoble these may be, with a type of nobility and sanctity that fully covers up and compensates the deficiency of the means.

GANDHI'S PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

Gandhi's philosophical outlook was diametrically opposite to those of Marx, Engels, Lenin or Che Guevara. Gandhi was no doubt a politician par excellence, who galvanised the Indian liberation struggle against British imperialism and remained the spirit behind the Indian National Congress—the vanguard of the nationalists from his entrance into politics till he breathed his last. He was of course the liaison between Indian nationalism in ferment on the one end and His Majesty's Government or its authorised envoys on the other. There is no disputing the fact that he was the chief spokesman of the resurgent India undergoing the birth pang of nationhood, negotiating with the master diplomats of His Majesty's Government, who persistently worked his way to the deliverance of India from the imperial bondage; yet Gandhi was basically a religious personality. As it has been observed, "Gandhiji was one of the outstanding religious pioneers of all times."³⁰

(a) Religious Basis of His Thought

Gandhi was a devout Hindu although not a "Fanatic Hindu" as Dr. B. R. Ambedkar tried to brand him.³¹ Maude Royden Shaw felt that he was "more like Jesus Christ than any one else" he met.³² He is said to have possessed the "Mind of Christ much more surely than the Orthodox Christians."³³ Devout Christians sought his advice as to how to popularise Christianity.³⁴ Some branded him as a Buddhist and others as a "Christian Mohammedan".³⁵ He was more than all these—a Jew, a Parsi, a Confucian and a Jain.

Of course no religious creed was wide enough to encompass his views within its fold. He had equal respect for all religions and did not subscribe to any sectarian faith. To him, "The Allah of Islam is the same as the God of the Christians and the Iswara of the Hindus."³⁶ His daily prayer was an appeal both



Leading him to Socialist India.
(Gandhi in the precincts of Sevagram Ashram)



Gandhi, the Barrister.



The Royalist turned a rebel.
(Gandhi, the Satyagrahi in South Africa)

can be attained only by incessant toil in the service of the country and humanity at large. In 1938 when one of his Christian visitors in search of advice as to how to be a good Christian, wanted to know the fundamental motive force behind his social and political activities, Gandhi replied : "My motive has been purely religious . . . I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind and this I could not do unless I took part in politics."⁴⁰ Speaking from another angle, Gandhi said, "I can say without the slightest hesitation and yet in all humility that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."⁴¹ He further said, "For me there are no politics devoid of religion. They subserve religion. Politics bereft of religion are a death trap because they kill the soul."⁴²

(b) Deep Sense of Morality

Since Gandhi's deep religiosity dragged him to the vortex of politics, the primary considerations behind his politics were ethics and morality. His deep religiosity made him a spiritual personality and as Romain Rolland describes him, he was "a master of spiritual power."⁴³ For him religion and morality were two sides of the same coin and they formed together an organic whole. As he said: "True religion and true morality are inseparably bound up with each other. Religion is to morality what water is to the seed that is sown in the soil."⁴⁴ On another occasion he said: "As soon as we lose the moral basis we cease to be religious. There is no such thing as religion overriding morality."⁴⁵ Hence his deep religiosity paved the way for his moral and ethical approach to every aspect of social life, politics not being excluded and such moral and ethical approach to politics became almost an inalienable part of his public and political activities.

It was not only by an accident but also by design that Gandhi plunged into the mire of politics and became deeply involved in it for over half a century. The primary objective behind taking such a plunge was not the desire for pelf and power but moral and spiritual considerations. Unlike the leaders of liberation movements in other countries like Lenin or Stalin, Mao or Chao, Hocht Minh or Fidel Castro or even Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Gandhi's ambition was never a political

office or an ornamental position in the political system of independent India. When independence came in the trail of partition, he was not there in the Capital to join the jubilation, or indulge in the scramble for power, or office; he was fasting and praying at Beliaghata, brooding over the spiritual and ethical degeneration that engulfed the nation as a necessary concomitant of partition. As Gane Sharp has written : "The man who was called the father of India was heavy at heart, as political independence came to India on August 15, 1947 He was busy fighting the riots in India. He issued no message to the people. He fasted and prayed."⁴⁶ He kept himself busy in consoling people, in the areas smitten by communal strife, murder, bloodshed and burning and looting and attempting to restore confidence among them.

As Kingsley Martin has observed, he was a curious blend of a saint and an astute politician.⁴⁷ His personality can be more accurately portrayed by saying that the saintly virtues were more dominant in him and far outdistanced the features of a politician. Miss Ethel Manin accordingly said : "He should be regarded not as a political leader despite his immensely valuable service to the Indian Nationalist Movement and the political repercussions of his fasts but rather as a spiritual leader, and teacher, his so-called political activities merely as the logical outcome of his ethics and philosophy."⁴⁸

Gandhi stepped into the arena of politics because he wanted to cleanse the Augean stable that politics was or the "moral slum" that politics had become. He aimed at redeeming politics from the slough of immorality and irrationality and giving it a moral, rational, ethical and religious tone and temper. He was a "great soul" or "the peer of the greatest souls of previous ages"⁴⁹ and the primary consideration behind his entry into politics was to spiritualise the same. As he himself said, "If I seem to take part in politics it is only because politics to-day encircle us like the coils of a snake, from which, one cannot get out, no matter, how one tries. I want to wrestle with the snake . . . I am trying to introduce religion into politics."

(c) Emphasis on Purity of Means

Politics in the modern world has degenerated into a game whose governing rules are cunning and craft, expediency and

unscrupulousness. Machiavellism rules the roost. End is treated as a matter of supreme consideration and no attention is paid to the choice of appropriate means for the attainment of the end. It is felt that if the end is noble, it justifies application of any means however ignoble. When such a principle is accepted as the governing rule of public conduct or statecraft, at its worst, politics becomes immoral and at its best amoral. But Gandhi wanted to salvage politics from amoralism and Machiavellism and spiritualise it. He conceived politics not only inseparable from ethics but as simply an extension of ethics to the domain of public affairs and hence he could not accept any divergence between end and means. For him means were as important as the end or still more important than the latter and politics was no exception to it. Accordingly he said : "They say 'means are after all means'. I would say 'means are after all everything'. As the means, so the end. There is no wall of separation between means and end."⁵⁰

Thus Gandhi laid emphasis on the nature, quality and purity of the means for the attainment of the end. To him the nature of the means used for the attainment of the end shall determine the nature and character of the end and application of immoral and impure means may distort the end in view. The end however noble, may get tainted and perverted if the means used for its attainment are morally indefensible. Accordingly Gandhi wrote : "Realisation of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means. This is a proposition that admits of no exception."⁵¹

Gandhi felt that the nature of the means applied shall finally determine the nature of the end, its quality and character in the same way as the nature of the seed determines the nature of the tree. Seeds of a thorny or a poisonous plant however carefully nourished or nurtured shall only germinate and develop into a thorny or a poisonous plant and the saplings of delicious fruit trees when properly watered and attended, shall blossom into an orchard of delicious fruit trees. Equally true is the case of a bad or immoral means giving rise to a bad or immoral end. As he wrote : "The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree, and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end, as there is between the seed and the tree."⁵²

Gane Sharp in his analysis of Gandhi's emphasis on moral power has equally observed : "In Gandhi's thinking, means and ends should be equally pure. The end growing out of the means is just as logical as the tree growing from the seed."⁵³

(d) Religiosity and Non-Violence

Gandhi's profound religiosity stimulated his passion for inducting religion and morality into the realm of politics and transforming politics so as to give it a moralistic tinge. That prompted him too to discern no dichotomy between the end and the means and he considered them to be made of the same metal. This religiosity also drove him to adopt non-violence as the only sane and the safe technique for the attainment of political and social objective.

The Gandhian concept of religion like all other religions revolves round the concept of God or a Supreme, Infinite and Immanent being or in Hegelian terms an "Absolute Mind" or "Idea". Like all spiritual personalities, Gandhi viewed the entire universe as the manifestation of the Divine purpose and unfoldment of Divine will. All the sentient and insentient beings, the material and spiritual world, were viewed by him as mere outward manifestations of the universal spirit and unfoldment of the Divine purpose. In Upanishadic terms he believed that God had pervaded the entire universe and He was the source and essence of all values, morality and religions. Accordingly he said as late as 1925 : "To me God is Truth and Love. God is ethics and morality. God is fearless, God is the source of light and life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. He transcends speech and reasons."⁵⁴ About 15 years later, Gandhi emphasised, "He (God) rules our action and I literally believe that not a blade of grass grows or moves without His will."⁵⁵

Although Gandhi believed in the existence of God at the root of everything, sentient and insentient, light and darkness or the universe at large, his concept of God flies in a tangent from the traditional concept of the personality of God. As a believer in equal relevance of all religions, he of course did not distinguish between the different deities worshipped in different

religions. His concept of God or God-hood far transcended the conventional identification of God with Rama or Krishna, Allah or Jesus Christ; yet he conceived God, like the Hindu religious leaders, in terms of Satchidananda. Like them, he felt that God is the very personification of Sat, Chit and Anand or Truth, Knowledge and Bliss. Unlike most of them, he laid unqualified emphasis on the aspect of Sat or Satya or Truth. Hence he has written in *From Yeravda Mandir* : "Sat or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God."⁵⁶ He went still further and said, "On deeper thinking however it will be realised, that Sat or Satya is the only correct and fully significant name of God."⁵⁷

Gandhi not only considered Satya or Truth as "the most important name of God" or "the only correct and fully significant name of God"; he treated Truth itself as God. Hence he has written : "In fact it is more correct to say that Truth is God than to say God is Truth."⁵⁸ Thus for Gandhi, Truth is the very personification of God, instead of God embodying Truth. He found God in Truth instead of discovering Truth in God. Of course he identified both and treated them as interchangeable. But his primary emphasis was on Truth. As he writes : "For me God and Truth are convertible terms and if any one told me that God was a God of untruth or a God of torture I would decline to worship him."⁵⁹

If Gandhi was a spiritual personality with a profoundly religious approach to every thing that he thought or did, he was primarily a seeker after Truth or seeker of God through Truth. As he said : "I am devoted to none but Truth and I owe no discipline to anybody but Truth."⁶⁰ His own life was a grand catalogue of experiments with Truth; besides he had a profound belief that life's meaning can be discovered and its beauty and sweetness enjoyed, only through the pursuit of Truth. Pursuit of Truth holds the key to self-realisation of perfection of man, "To find Truth completely is to realise oneself and one's destiny i.e., to become perfect."⁶¹

Truth is not only the key to all success in life or in the language of T. H. Green, for doing a thing worth doing or enjoying a thing worth enjoying; the real significance of life can be measured by the extent of its adherence to Truth. Truth adds depth and meaning to life and makes life meaningful.

Human life worth living can be lived only in pursuing Truth. As he said : "Devotion to this Truth is the sole justification for our existence. All our activities should be centred in Truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life. When once this stage in the pilgrims progress is reached all other rules of correct living will come without effort" ⁶²

Gandhi also considered Truth as the very essence of all religions, and the preachings of all prophets and Godheads. It is not ritualism, the religious paraphernalia, and the formal religious performances, that are normally associated with religions, that bestow any sanctity on religions and make them living, life-giving and inspiring forces. Their emphasis on Truth and prescription of the ways and means for the attainment of the same, make them dynamic phenomena. Even the Godheads like Krishna or Rama, Christ or Mohammad are great not because of their superhuman power, but because of their emphasis on Truth. As Gandhi writes : "Truth is the first thing to be sought for and Beauty and Goodness will then be added unto you. That is what Christ really taught in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was to my mind a supreme artist because he saw and expressed Truth; and so was Muhammad, the Koran being the most perfect composition in all Arabic literature—at any rate that is what scholars say. It is because both of them strove just for Truth that the grace of expression naturally came in and yet neither Jesus, nor Muhammed, wrote on Art. That is the Truth and Beauty I crave for, live for and would die for." ⁶³

Thus Truth is Gandhi's God and the core of his religion. Real salvation of man and realisation of God are conceivable only through worshipping Truth, in pursuing Truth, in modelling one's thought, speech and action in the light of Truth. Attainment of God or Godhood goes in the same proportion as one pursues Truth in his personal conduct. Himself an humble but very earnest seeker after Truth, he expected those who wanted salvation to follow suit. But Gandhi as much a practical man of faith as a practical politician prescribes the conduct that may enable men to pursue and practise Truth, attain God or Godhood and obtain Divine bliss.

The seekers after Truth should have love for Truth. Their love for God should be confined to their love for Truth and

this love for Truth should be transformed into truthful conduct. Just as one attains the Hindu concept of Mokhya or salvation, or comes nearer God by complete renunciation of the earthly desires and making a complete surrender to God, Truth the Gandhian counterpart of God, can be realised or attained by renouncing all untruthful conduct and by reposing one's unflinching faith in Truth and Truth alone and transforming one's life, one's thoughts, words and deeds so as to bring them in conformity with Truth. As Gandhi advised the Ashramites : "Generally speaking observation of the law of Truth is understood merely to mean that we must speak the truth. But we in the Ashram should understand the word Satya or Truth in a much wider sense. There should be Truth in thought, Truth in speech and Truth in action."⁶⁴

The devotees of Truth, should therefore dedicate themselves to truthful conduct in their social relationship. They must have flair for Truth, rigidly adhere to it and cling fast on to it, or in other words to use Gandhian terminology, they must be Satyagrahis or lovers of Truth, experimenters of Truth like himself, living and dying for Truth and Truth alone. In their personal life as well as social relationship they must have profound reliance on Truth force or Soul force or the technique of Satyagraha.

Love of Truth that forms the centre of Gandhian religious belief implies not only pursuit of Truth. This pursuit of Truth in turn implies distinguishing, Truth from Untruth or falsehood, the permanent from the transitory and to properly discriminate the grain from the chaff, and not to mistake the wood for the tree. Just as an expert gardener raising a garden of fragrant flowers, carefully selects the desirable plants and removes the weeds that throttle the luxuriant growth of the plants of fragrant flowers, a lover of Truth must carefully distinguish Truth from Untruth. The untruth that stunts and stultifies realisation of Truth, must be eliminated and there must be persistent endeavour to get rid of such evil. In this search for Truth, the real worshipper in the shrine of Truth must give positive resistance to untruth that tries to overwhelm Truth. Thus resistance to untruth is inherent in the search for Truth and nobody realised it better than Gandhi. But such resistance shall be by way of truthful and civilised method and the technique of Satyagraha, relying mainly on soul force.

As rituals are necessary to initiate men of religious disposition to true religion, Gandhi felt, that to put the people on the right track so that ultimately they attain Truth, they must be made to observe certain code of conduct, apart from practising truth in thought, speech and deed that form a part of truthful conduct. Accordingly he emphasised, apart from the vow of truth, on the vows of brahmacharya, love or non-violence, non-possession and voluntary poverty. But of all these tenets of good conduct that qualify one to be a worshipper in the shrine of truth, Gandhi placed love or non-violence in the centre of his thought. The other vows such as the vows of truth, brahmacharya, voluntary poverty and non-possession, are primarily concerned with the personal conduct of the lover of Truth although they have also some social implications. But Love and Non-violence are aspects of the conduct of a lover of Truth that mainly concern others or fellow worshippers in the shrine of Truth. Love of Truth implies resistance to untruth that throttles progress towards realisation of Truth and in the process of giving such resistance, the seeker of Truth may encounter fellow travellers who may equally assert their adherence to the ideal of Truth but whose outlook may differ from one's own. Even if one is convinced of the inherent wisdom in his own outlook and the deficiency in the outlook of his opponents' approach to Truth, he should not try to impose upon the latter his own views by force.

Like John Strart Mill, Gandhi had the realisation that Truth has many sides and it can be discerned from many angles. Different individuals having different capacities can discern different aspects of Truth from different angles. All the visions so discerned concern Truth. As Gandhi wrote : "What appears to be different truths are like the countless and apparently different leaves of the same tree. Does not God himself appear to different individuals in different aspects? Hence there is nothing wrong in everyman following Truth according to his light. Indeed it is his duty to do so."⁶⁵ The seekers of Truth should therefore take cognisance of other seekers or their fellow travellers in their pursuit of Truth. Hence even while convinced of greater doses of Truth in one's vision, one need not force one's opponent to come round to his own point of view by the use of force or violence but try to convert the opponent by the

application of the technique of love and non-violence. As Gandhi said : "I have come to the conclusion that the definition—Truth is God—gives me the greatest satisfaction. And when you want to find Truth as God, the only inevitable means is love i.e., non-violence . . ." ⁶⁶ Hence Erik H. Erikson has observed, "Gandhi reminds us that since we cannot possibly know the absolute truth, we are therefore not competent to punish." ⁶⁷

Love like its Gandhian counterpart of Truth, is not a question of acquiescing with evil or injustice, it freely prescribes resistance to evil or injustice, but by a more human, rational, civilised and less aggressive and physically less over-whelming a method of resistance. As S. Radhakrishnan has very appropriately observed : "Love does not acquiesce in evil in wrong doing, injustice or exploitation. It does not evade the issue but fearlessly faces the wrongdoer and resists his wrong with the overpowering forces of love and suffering for it is contrary to human nature to fight with force. Our conflicts are to be settled by the human means of intelligence and goodwill or love and service." ⁶⁸

Thus whereas resistance to evil and injustice is inherent in the concept of love, the resistance assumes the form of non-violent resistance. For the sake of realisation of Truth or attainment of God, Love is considered as an eternal principle and the most potent weapon. This love necessarily implies absence of hatred and negation of inflicting injury on others. As Gandhi viewed it, "Ahimsa and love are one and the same thing." ⁶⁹

If realisation of God is the supreme objective, if God is identified with Truth, if love is the technique adopted for the realisation of Truth and if love and non-violence are convertible terms, realisation of Truth or the Gandhian God is inconceivable without non-violence. Thus for Gandhi, Truth, God, Love and Non-violence are almost synonyms. A lover of Truth shall inevitably attain God and the royal road to the shrine of Truth is Love and Non-violence. Gandhi's religiosity therefore led him to pin his faith on non-violence.

Besides, for Gandhi who was a believer in the identification of the means and the end, non-violence is the essence of Truth or as he said there is "only one fundamental truth which is Truth itself, otherwise known as Non-violence". ⁷⁰ Thus for

him Truth and Non-violence or Ahimsa are the obverse and the reverse of the same coin, the one is the end and the other is the means. Non-violence is not only the means for the attainment of Truth; it is as a matter of fact the only road leading to the shrine of Truth and the safest road too. Accordingly Gandhi observed : "It is perhaps clear . . . that without ahimsa it is not possible to seek and find Truth. Ahimsa and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say which is the obverse and which is the reverse ? Nevertheless ahimsa is the means. Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach and so ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means we are bound to reach the end, sooner or later. When once we have grasped this point final victory is beyond question."⁷¹ As Rene Maheu, Director General of UNESCO observed in respect of interrelationship between Gandhian concept of Truth and Non-violence : "In that relationship truth comes first and non-violence second; they are to one another as principle to consequence, as the end to the means If violence is the supreme sin against truth to resist it by an opposing violence is to commit the same sin and to be, likewise irremediably lost."⁷²

Thus Gandhi's profound religiosity, his deep sense of morality and his emphasis on the purity of means as that of the end subscribed to the forging of his grand strategy of non-violence. This doctrine of non-violence found its culmination and ultimate manifestation in the technique of Satyagraha-- the weapon he forged for fighting out the battle for vindicating Truth both in private and public life. Hence as Joan V. Bondurant has observed : "The most potent legacy Gandhi left to India was the technique of Satyagraha."⁷³

(e) The Technique of Satyagraha

Gandhi accepted the technique of Satyagraha as a potent weapon to solve all individual and social problems. As Prof. Venkatarangaiya has very appropriately observed : "Gandhi's contribution to human progress lies in the technique which he devised for waging a non-violent war and for resolving other social conflicts without violence. Satyagraha was the name

he gave to his technique Satyagraha is Gandhi's philosophy of life. It is the religion by which and for which he lived. It is also the religion by which he wanted all men to live."⁷⁴

Satyagraha as a technique marks the culmination of Gandhian religiosity, spiritualism and ethical and spiritual approach to the solution of individual and social problems. It synthesises all the supreme and subtler values cherished by Gandhi such as Truth, Love and Non-violence. Hence as Gene Sharp has very rightly observed : "Gandhi's philosophy of life and his method of opposing evil are both called 'Satyagraha'."⁷⁵ Satyagraha precludes employment of violence and hatred, anger and coercion, secrecy, or sabotage as strategies for social or political change. Rather on the positive side, it reclines too heavily on love, renunciation of violence and self-suffering. It emanates from love and non-violence and accepts self-suffering, instead of inflicting injury on others, as its prime-mover. As Gandhi has himself said : "For the quest of Truth, involves tapas—self-suffering, sometimes even unto death. There can be no place in it for a trace of self-interest."⁷⁶

Gandhi as much a sober realist as a soaring idealist was not only convinced of the potency of Satyagraha as a technique for political and social change; he as an experimenter with Truth, experimented it on many occasions during his life time to wrest victory from his political opponents. Whether in South Africa, fighting for the vindication of the rights of the coloured people, or in India fighting for the liberation of the motherland, he applied this technique of Satyagraha or soul-force, or the technique of love and non-violence. While fighting against the policy of racial discrimination of the Government of South Africa, he never lost sight of his basic principle of purity of means and the non-violent technique. This technique was completely free from rancour or bitterness. While undergoing imprisonment for fighting against the white South African Government of General Smuts, Gandhi prepared a pair of sandals for General Smuts that was presented to the latter after his release from prison which General Smuts used for many a summer. As he commented upon Gandhi's conduct during these days of struggle : "There was no hatred or personal ill-feeling, the spirit of humanity was never absent and when, the fight was over there was the atmosphere in which a decent peace

could be concluded.”⁷⁷

While fighting the war of the Indian settlers against the Government, that lasted for over eight years, Gandhi did not take advantage of the plight of his adversary. Hence during the Boer war and the Zulu Rebellion, he organised ambulance corps in defence of Natal Government. During the Satyagraha campaign, the European employees of the Union Railways struck work, greatly embarrassing the government and when many people suggested that Gandhi should take advantage of the situation by joining hands with the Railway workers to deal the final blow, which would prove decisive for the victory of the Indians, Gandhi followed his usual “non-embarrassment policy” and shrank back. General Smuts as a matter of fact was overwhelmed by such Gandhian gesture and as one of his Secretaries wrote to Gandhi : “I do not like your people and I do not care to assist them at all. But what am I to do? You help us in our days of need. How can we lay hands on you? I often wish that you took to violence like the English strikers and then we would know at once how to dispose of you. But you will not injure even the enemy, you desire victory by self suffering alone and never transgress your self-imposed limits of courtesy and chivalry. And that is what reduces us to sheer helplessness.”⁷⁸

Gandhi's struggles on his return to India were also non-violent. When he took up cudgels against the British Government, the instruments used were morally sanctified method of Non-Co-operation or Civil Disobedience—the method of civil or civilised resistance. All the three major struggles against the British Government, the Non-Co-operation Movement of 1921-22, the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-31 and the Quit India Movement of 1942 were non-violent movements with emphasis on civilised coercion. During the liberation struggle, he did never deviate from his basic principle that the means must be pure and noble and if liberation from the British dominion was a noble end, the means must be equally noble and shall be founded on the rock of love and non-violence. Accordingly he wrote in *Young India* : “I do not believe in armed risings. They are a remedy, worse than the disease sought to be cured. They are a token of the spirit of revenge and impatience and anger. The method of violence cannot do good

in the long run. We have a better method This method is to refuse to be party to the wrong.”⁷⁹

Non-violence as a part of the liberation strategy was never for Gandhi a policy to be adopted or rejected at will depending upon its success or failure. It was a part of his overall creed. Hence he said, “Non-violence being a policy means that it can upon due notice be given up when it proves unsuccessful or ineffective. But simple morality demands that whilst a particular policy is pursued, it must be pursued with all one’s heart.”⁸⁰ Thus he matched the might of the British power in India by soul force or non-violence. As he said, “The foundation of our movement rests on complete non-violence.”⁸¹ When the Non-Co-operation Movement was in full swing, when it had almost attracted the attention of the whole country and had almost shaken the prestige of the Imperial power, it was suddenly suspended by Gandhi to the consternation of many of his valued colleagues, after the upsurge of violence in Chauri-choura wherein some Congress volunteers were involved in murdering about 20 Constables and a Sub-Inspector of Police. In furnishing an explanation for the suspension of the Non-Co-operation Movement, he wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru. “I assure you that if the thing had not been suspended we would have been leading not a non-violent struggle but essentially a violent struggle.”⁸²

Not only Gandhi’s instrument to fight the war of liberation against British Imperialism was non-violent; on its positive side, the war was waged with a spirit of love for the enemy even during the continuance of the war. Although he waged a war against British imperialism, he was, till the termination of the war of liberation with victory on Indian side, as Earl Mount Batten of Burma has styled him “a real friend” of the Britishers who was never smitten by rancour or bitterness, and never desired to take advantage of the distress of the political adversary—the British Government. S. Radhakrishnan has appropriately observed : “In all his campaigns, whenever the enemy was in trouble Gandhi went to his rescue. He condemns all attempts to use the enemy’s need as one’s opportunity.”⁸³

While fresh from South Africa Gandhi had taken a plunge headlong in the liberation struggle, he was never in favour of striking a bargain with Britain when she was in trouble in

Europe, so as to take advantage of her adversity. Rather he aided the British war effort by becoming a recruiting agent of the Government of India, for which E.M.S. Namboodiripad later charged him of recruiting "cannon-fodder for imperialism's wars."⁸⁴ In a letter to the Viceroy on April 29, 1918 Gandhi said, "I recognise that in the hour of its danger, we must give—as we have decided to give—ungrudging and unequivocal support to the Empire of which we aspire in the near future to be partners in the sense as the dominions overseas."⁸⁵ While assuring the Viceroy the support of the people he said: "If I could make my countrymen retrace their steps, I would make them withdraw all the Congress resolutions and not whisper 'Home Rule' or 'Responsible Government' during the pendency of the war."⁸⁶

When the Second World War started and the British Government and her people were in distress, Gandhi's sympathy went to them. As a prophet and apostle of non-violence, he was against war as such, but the sufferings of the British nation and the British people, against whom he had arrayed his forces, moved him, and his overflowing love for the adversary, almost overwhelmed him. He wrote on September 25, 1939: "My personal reaction towards this war is one of great horror than ever before. And yet strange as it may appear my sympathies are with the allies."⁸⁷

Gandhi also did not like to embarrass the Government during the course of the War by demanding from the Government a categorical declaration of War aims which may include grant of right of self-determination to India. When the A.I.C.C. meeting at Wardha in October 1939 wanted an assurance from the Government that "India must be declared an independent nation and at present application should be given to this status to the largest possible extent", Gandhi emphasised that "Whether there is on the part of the British Government a favourable declaration or not the Congress has to decide upon the course it would adopt in the event of an invasion of India."⁸⁸ While he preached against all wars and launched his Individual Civil Disobedience Movement, he took care not to interfere in and imperil the War efforts. He even suggested to the Allies that India could be used as a base for operation.⁸⁹ When the Congress Working Committee wanted to embarrass the Government by starting mass civil disobedience movement during the

War, Gandhi advised caution presumably with the intention that Government should not be embarrassed during the time of distress. As he said : "I do not think that the time is yet ripe for a large scale civil disobedience movement. It can come after the War."⁹⁰

Thus Gandhi had no place in his strategy, for cunning or craft, tactful bargaining, exploitation of the adversity of the adversary, unscrupulousness and above all perfidy and sabotage. Equally important for him was openness of approach as opposed to secrecy that Che Guevara or Lenin so much valued. His life was an open book and a worshipper of Truth that he was, he had no faith in secret diplomacy. All his Satyagraha campaigns were preceded by open letters to the authorities demanding redress of grievances and at the failure on the part of the authorities by the stipulated time, campaigns were launched. His strategy was one of open diplomacy conducted in the glare of publicity or politics conducted in the market place. He utilised his *Indian Opinion* while in South Africa and the *Harijan* and *Young India* while in India, to give publicity to his intentions and the strategy he wanted to pursue against the Government he was fighting. As a matter of fact they were his mouth-pieces to publicise his political programme. During his Satyagraha campaigns in South Africa, the authorities were being taken into confidence about the nature and date of the struggle. In 1908 Gandhi had warned the Transvaal Government that if "The Asiatic Act is not repealed in terms of the settlement and if Government's decision to that effect is not communicated before a specific date the certificate collected by the Indians will be burnt and we shall humbly take the consequence."⁹¹ Subsequently before his Great Struggle of 1913 started that culminated in the victory of the Black people, he informed the Government of South Africa that passive resistance would be continued so long as "racial bar disfigures the Immigration Act, the rights existing prior to the passing of the Act are not restored and maintained, the status of women married in South Africa is not secured; and generally so long as the spirit of generosity and justice does not pervade the administration of the existing laws".⁹²

During his Champaran struggle Gandhi never made a secret of his intentions and strategy. As Gandhi wrote to the District

Magistrate on April 17, 1917, "As I have no desire to do anything without the knowledge of the authorities I beg to inform you that . . . I am going to Shampur and the surrounding villages, tomorrow morning. The party hopes to start about 3 a.m."⁹³

Before starting the Non-Co-operation Movement on August 1, 1920 Gandhi also took the Viceroy into confidence. In his letter dated June 22, 1920, he made it clear to the Viceroy, "My duty to the empire to which I owe my loyalty requires me to resist the cruel violence that had been done to the Musalman sentiment."⁹⁴ Before the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 was launched, Gandhi informed the Viceroy of his intentions. In his letter dated March 2, while inviting the attention of the Viceroy to the problems that needed remedy, he wrote : "But if you cannot see your way to deal with these evils and my letter makes no appeal to your heart on the eleventh day of this month I shall proceed with such co-workers of the ashram as I can take to disregard the provisions of the salt laws."⁹⁵

Gandhi gave vent to his "Quit India" conviction immediately after the failure of the Cripps Mission. He was firm in respect of the point that "first the British Must Go".⁹⁶ In his conversation with Louis Fischer, Gandhi even authorised the former to convey to the Viceroy his intention of launching a movement to ensure early evacuation of the British regime in India.⁹⁷ Even after the Quit India resolution was adopted on August 8, 1942 in the A.I.C.C. meeting at Bombay and he was authorised to launch the campaign, he informed the members that sufficient notice shall be given to the Viceroy before the actual commencement of the campaign. "I will now wait upon the Viceroy and plead with him for the acceptance of the Congress demand . . . Let me tell you at the outset that the real struggle does not commence today, I have yet to go through much ceremonial as I always do."⁹⁸

Thus Gandhi's strategy for the attainment of political goal of independence of India was never one of violence and bloodshed nor was it based on craft or cunning, expediency or unscrupulousness. As S. Radhakrishnan has observed, for Gandhi, "Freedom from subjection should be won not by the usual methods of secret societies, armed rebellion, arson or assassination. The way to freedom is neither by abject entreaty

nor by revolutionary violence.”⁹⁹ Even Gandhi himself said : “In Satyagraha there is no place for fraud or falsehood, or any kind of untruth. Fraud and untruth today are stalking the world. I cannot be a helpless witness to such a situation.”¹⁰⁰

To sum up, Love and Non-violence are the real touchstones to measure the Gandhian approach to problems and his philosophy of life. Although a politician, the principle of taking advantage of the adversary to win a point or gain some political advantage was completely alien to his nature. Politics for him was not a question of tactful bargaining; on the other hand, it was for him a question of high moral principle, duty and sacrifice, and love for the adversary. Although a politician, his political scruple inherited from his experiment with truth and non-violence, could not condone selfishness but could extol self-suffering as the highest political virtue and the most potent diplomatic weapon to fight the adversary. A revolutionary that he was, he fought the battle of resurgent India not with arms and ammunitions either conventional or nuclear, but with the sword of love, fasting, and self-suffering. The technique of this peaceful revolutionary was directed not at coercing the adversary physically so as to extort concessions from him but at coercing him psychologically and rousing in him sympathy and pity thereby converting the adversary to one’s own way of thinking. As Sir Arnold Toynbee has observed, “Gandhi found a way of bringing about a great political change—a transfer of political power on the grand scale—without blood-shed and without animosity. He not only found the way; he moved hundreds of millions of people to follow him in taking it . . . He taught mankind a moral lesson in the field of politics and this on the eve of the opening of the Atomic Age.”¹⁰¹

Thus although Gandhi was a knight-errant fighting the battle of the weak and the exploited, he waged the battle with love and non-violence—instruments least depended upon for waging a war. That made him to occupy a unique position as a political strategist.

Hence profound religiosity, love for Truth, moral and ethical approach to problems, dedication to the philosophy of love and non-violence and emphasis on the purity of means as that of the end, constituted the core of Gandhi’s philosophy of life.

GANDHIAN SOCIALISM AND NON-VIOLENT TECHNIQUE

Gandhi's philosophy of life, his overall emphasis on ethics and morality, the indissoluble bond that he forged between means and the end, and the value he attached to non-violence and Satyagraha, that shaped his political philosophy and determined the tone and temper of his political strategy, also had their impact in determining his socialist strategy. His socialist strategy, the method he advocated for the attainment of the Socialist El Dorado, assumed its shape and form, shade and colour from this spiritual, moral and ethical emphasis and particularly the emphasis on non-violence and Satyagraha. As Albert Einstein observed, "He (Gandhi) has invented an entirely new and humane technique for the liberation struggle of an oppressed people and carried it out with greatest energy and devotion."¹⁰² This humane technique was extended from the field of liberation struggle to the arena of socio-economic transformation in the direction of an egalitarian society that Gandhi cherished so much and that formed the core of Gandhian concept of independence.

(a) Need for a Crystal-Like Means

As discussed earlier, for Gandhi who considered means and ends as inter-changeable terms, good or noble ends are only the other side of the noble means that is applied for the attainment of the same. In order to attain any noble end, the means must be equally noble. The watering down of the quality or the purity of the means shall lead to degeneration of the nature of the end. The end may itself recede, and may become difficult of attainment. As Gandhi said : "They say 'means are after all means', I would say 'means are after all every thing'. As the means so the end. There is no wall of separation between means and end. Indeed the creator has given us control (and that too very limited) over means, none over the end. Realisation of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means. This is a proposition that admits of no exception."¹⁰³

The wisdom contained in the Gandhian emphasis on the purity of means to attain the ideal objective was also realised by Aldus Huxley who writes, "Good ends can be achieved only by the employment of appropriate means. The end can not justify

the means. The means employed determine the nature of the ends produced. Men aspire to do good and yet so frequently achieve evil, because their means are bad.”¹⁰⁴

Gandhi's emphasis on the purity of means that forms a part of his life's philosophy is equally applicable to his concept of socialism. As already discussed earlier, Socialism as a social philosophy and an economic doctrine is primarily concerned with moral and ethical reordering of society. Although different socialist thinkers define socialism differently and lay emphasis on different aspects of socialism i.e., Marx emphasising apart from other things on “Nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange” and others on income distribution or the pattern of organisation of the economy and the nature of state power, the primary consideration of all socialists commencing from the earlier, Utopian Socialists through the Scientific Socialists like Marx, Engels and Lenin down to modern ultra-leftists, is a moral and ethical reordering of society. In the socialist revolt against the bourgeois system of economy and the social system that it engenders, the primary inspiration is moral and ethical.

Negatively speaking the abysmal poverty, degradation, degeneration and deprivation of millions of people in face of unparalleled material prosperity of a handful is revolting. Equally revolting is the spectacle of millions of ill-clad and unhealthy children going without education and famished youngmen going without jobs, when a tiny fraction of the society, enjoying a bulk of the nation's wealth have ostentatious living in luxury and suffering, if ever, not for scarcity or shortage but for affluence and too much of indulgence, enjoying their prosperity not because of their superior ability but because of the accident of birth. The irrational system of bourgeois economy under which millions of workers and peasants are huddled together in factories or farms to earn their bare subsistence at the expense of their blood, sweat and tears, and some times off their work and food too, not because they choose to be idle but because the owners of the means of production prefer to keep their machines idle or their field fallow or because there has been too much of production in the past, is considered obnoxious, anti-social and intolerable. The accumulation of wealth of a few that is based on the exploitation of many is

morally reprehensible. The unbridled, egocentric, rugged, and ruthless laissezfairism that eats away the very vitals of the society, is looked down upon by the socialist thinkers and socialist strategists, with contemptuous disgust. Thus the initial response is moral and ethical.

On the positive side socialism as Ashoka Mehta has very appropriately observed is "a science of a new society as well as the vision of a new civilisation."¹⁰⁵ It is the picture of a society devoid of all contradictions of abysmal poverty amidst unparalleled affluence and unemployment when machine remain idle and lands lie fallow, or accumulation of wealth amidst decay and degeneration of human beings for want of the bare minimum. It is the vision of a more scientific, rational and just reordering of society that does away with the inherent contradictions of the pre-socialist or bourgeois society. It is the dream of a society from which exploitation, poverty, misery and injustice are banished and in which affluence is shared by all.

Besides material affluence—higher wages, shorter hours of work, better living conditions, greater amenities for all, insurance against sickness, old age, and accident, and above all security against unemployment—socialism also aspires to reconstruct society on the basis of equality, fraternity and fellowship. Accordingly the Socialist Union is of opinion that although under different varieties of socialism there is too much of emphasis on material prosperity "they are only the preliminaries to the real struggle for a qualitative change for a society with a different content combining a fuller life for every one with some finer more co-operative way of living together".¹⁰⁶ C.A.R. Crosland has equally admitted that the primary emphasis of socialism is on a new set of values that are moral and ethical in nature.¹⁰⁷

Gandhi who was less ostentatious than most of the socialists in his profession but more radical in his faith about socialism, caught this moral aspect and the ethical value of the concept of socialism and adhered to it more zealously and firmly than most of the modern socialists. Spiritualism is the golden thread that runs through the length and breadth of Gandhian socialist thought. Not only ethicism and spiritualism provide the inspiration and constitute the core of his socialism; the entire fabric

of his socialism is spiritualism, ethicism and morality writ large.

Socialism was a beautiful word for him because it encompassed an egalitarian society, a society of equals where the distinction between the rich and the poor, high and low no longer exists and an atmosphere of fellowship and fraternity prevails.¹⁰⁸ Gandhi, a spiritual personality, who did not touch any thing that he did not transform ethically or morally, for whom even economics must bear a moral or ethical look, was thus concerned with the moral or ethical aspect of socialism. As James E. Bristol has observed : "There is an inexorable relationship between the methods used to achieve our goal and the goal itself when finally reached. . . . the end is in fact the sum total of the means we use to reach it. The 'law of harvest' is not just a quaint phrase to be found in holy writ. We reap what we sow and only what we sow and for all our lofty desires and avowals of idealism thorn bushes refuse to produce grapes and thistles figs."¹⁰⁹ If socialism is primarily a moral and ethical concept, the means for the attainment of the same must be a morally and ethically sanctified one. The Marxian amorism in respect of choice of method is therefore rejected outright by Gandhi and he vouched without reservation that the means to be applied for the attainment of the noble end i.e., socialism, must be equally noble. As he writes : "This socialism is as pure as crystal. It therefore requires crystal like means to achieve it. Impure means result in an impure end One can not reach truth by untruthfulness. Truthful conduct alone can reach truth."¹¹⁰

Gandhi was not a lone figure in realising that an ideal objective like socialism can not be attained by any ignoble means. It is quite natural of a spiritual personality like Gandhi, whose life, philosophy and mission constituted a single and integrated fabric, whose warp and the woof are provided by morality or ethics. But an impassioned socialist like Milovan Djilas, who, in his earlier days, inspired by the vision of a socialist El Dorado, condoned morally untenable methods for the attainment of the ideal objective, subsequently felt disillusioned with the direction the state of affairs assumed in the communist countries and has gone on to appreciate the indissoluble bond that ties together ends and means and makes them an integrated whole. He writes : "Throughout history there have been no

ideal ends which were attained with non-ideal, inhuman means, just as there has been no free society which was built by slaves. Nothing so well reveals the reality and greatness of ends as the methods used to attain them. If the end must be used to condone the means, then there is something in the end itself, in its reality, which is not worthy. That which really blesses the end, which justifies the efforts and sacrifices, for it, is the means : their constant perfection, humaneness increasing freedom . . . Thus by justifying the means because of the end, the end itself becomes increasingly more distant and unrealistic while the frightful reality of the means becomes increasingly obvious and intolerable.”¹¹¹

The Marxian Socialists of India, who during their days of youth, profoundly influenced by the Marxian vision of a saner and juster society, devoid of exploitation, almost freely prescribed adoption of any means for the attainment of the end, after witnessing the dehumanising effects of the application of morally untenable methods, have also veered round the Gandhian emphasis on purity of means for the attainment of the noble end. Accordingly Jaya Prakash Narayan has observed : “The evil ends that had resulted from the evil means in Russia particularly the foul means that were used to perpetuate the staggering crimes during the purges revolted me from the ‘revolutionary ethics’ of Marxism and forced me to question if good ends could even be achieved by bad means.”¹¹²

(b) Non-Violent Technique inherent in Socialism

The forging of an indissoluble bond between ends and means and the emphasis on the application of pure means or morally sanctified means for the attainment of a noble or a moral end, led Gandhi to anchor his faith on the adoption of the non-violent technique for the attainment of his socialist El Dorado. In this respect Gandhi occupies a position in the spectrum of socialist thought diametrically opposite to the stand taken by Marx. If Marx represents one extreme, Gandhi represents the other.

The amorality of Marx, his indifference to the nature and quality of means for the attainment of a noble end is at the root of his adoption of violent method. Of course Marx and Engels did not completely rule out the possibility of application

of means short of violence; yet their propensity was in favour of violent methods. Hence for them it was but natural to believe that, "the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat".¹¹³

On the other hand Gandhi's identification of ends with the means made him to conceive of socialism only in the context of non-violent method. Accordingly he said, "Truth and Ahimsa must incarnate in socialism."¹¹⁴

But Gandhi's unshakable faith in non-violence, as the appropriate technique for the attainment of socialism is as much due to profundity of his faith in non-violence, as it is an aspect of his conviction about the purity of means for the attainment of a noble objective. It has already been indicated that for Gandhi, Truth, God, Love and Non-violence are synonymous and inter-changeable terms. A worshipper of Truth can not but be a follower of Non-violence and Gandhi's love of Truth made him an apostle of Non-violence. Accordingly Gandhi writes, "Ahimsa and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them."¹¹⁵ His worship of Truth had drawn him towards non-violence and if he was attracted towards socialism, non-violence provided the propelling force. As J. E. Bristol has observed : "The believer in non-violence shares with many others the goal of a decent, just and equitable society. He wants to see an end to injustice, tyranny, corruption, and the exploitation of men by their fellows. With others he is deeply concerned to establish peace in the world but not a peace purchased at any price. He knows that the only peace that can endure and be worthy of the name is based on justice."¹¹⁶ As Gandhi understood it, a votary of truth and non-violence can not tolerate violence any where in any form, and economic exploitation of one by the other, and economic inequality, were also treated by him as acts of violence which no lover of non-violence can encounter and entertain. As he said, "The principles of non-violence necessitates complete abstention from exploitation in any form. If we are to be non-violent we must then not wish for anything on this earth which the meanest or the lowest of human beings can not have."¹¹⁷

Gandhian concept of non-violence has another fact too. Non-violence by the very nature of things runs contrary to the

accumulation of wealth or property by illegitimate or doubtful means. As Gandhi writes : "Non-violence affords the fullest protection to one's self-respect and sense of honour, but not always to possession of land or movable property, though its habitual practice does prove a better bulwark than the possession of armed men to defend them. Non-violence in the very nature of things is of no assistance in the defence of ill-gotten gains and immoral acts."¹¹⁸

Further non-violence of Gandhian conception is irreconcilable with acquisitiveness or greed, or the passion for accumulation. Rather non-violence implies just a reverse trend i.e., renunciation or surrender of one's self-interest for the rest of the world. Hence he said, "Individuals and nations who would practise non-violence must be prepared to sacrifice . . . their all except honour."¹¹⁹ Thus his concept of non-violence that stimulated his revolt against economic exploitation,—that stands at the root of social inequality and inegalitarian society,—energised his passion to condemn accumulation and acclaim renunciation, also prompted Gandhi to be a socialist. Accordingly Gandhi wrote in *Harijan* on April 20, 1940 : "I have claimed that I was a socialist long before those I know in India had avowed their creed. But my socialism was natural to me and not adopted from any books. It came out of my unshakable belief in non-violence. No man could be actively non-violent and not rise against social injustice no matter where it occurred."¹²⁰

If adherence to non-violence stimulated Gandhi's passion for socialism and thus formed the core of his socialist thought and if he did not distinguish between ends and means, it is but natural to expect that his socialism which is an aspect of his overall creed of non-violence is inconceivable without unflinching loyalty to non-violence. If socialism is primarily a motive force to eliminate violence from the society—the violence perpetrated through economic exploitation of man by man—how can it be possible to conceive it through the application of violence ? A non-violent social system can be established only by the application of a method which is equally non-violent. Gandhi had already posed the issue that it was not possible to "get a rose through planting a noxious weed".¹²¹ Thus as any noble end was beyond Gandhi's purview unless it was associa-

ted with noble means a noble end like socialism was considered a day-dream unless it is tagged together to non-violent means.

(c) Rejection of the Technique of Violence

The Gandhian peaceful and non-violent revolution in India is contemporaneous with the Bolshevik Revolution of the Soviet Union. Gandhi was also a contemporary of Lenin, the architect of Bolshevik Revolution. He was as much inspired by the vision of ameliorating the lot of the millions of the underdogs as was Lenin in respect of his own country; yet the Bolshevik method, the strategy of violent revolution, was anathema for Gandhi. Emotionally, spiritually and intellectually, he was repelled by the method of violence. He was sceptical whether the Bolshevik Revolution that was grounded on the violent overthrow of the pre-revolutionary regime and forcible enthronement of the proletariat in the seat of power would ever serve the long-term interest of the proletariat. Even if it would succeed, Gandhi would not condone application of violent method for the attainment of this lofty objective. Hence he said : "I am yet ignorant of what exactly Bolshevism is. I have not been able to study it But I know that insofar as it is based on violence and denial of God, it repels me. I do not believe in short-violent cuts to success. Those Bolshevik friends who are bestowing their attention on me should realise that however much I may sympathise with and admire worthy motives I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes. There is therefore really no meeting ground between the school of violence and myself"¹²³

Subsequently, in his discussion with the students of Gujrat Vidyapith he acclaimed the Bolshevik ideal although his knowledge about it as per his own admission was still inadequate; yet he could not go all out in favour of Bolshevism because of the premium it put on violence. As he said : "I must confess that I have not been able fully to understand Bolshevism. All that I know is that it aims at the abolition of the institution of private property. This is an application of the ethical ideal of non-possession in the realm of economics, and if the people adopted this ideal of their own accord, or could be made to accept it by means of peaceful persuasion there would be nothing like it. But from what I know of the Bolshevism it does

not preclude the use of force but freely sanctions it for the expropriation of private property and for maintaining the collective state-ownership of the same."¹²³

Although the Indian Communists had great suspicion about Gandhi's revolutionary role and did never mince words to brand him as an agent of British imperialism and Indian bourgeoisie, Gandhi never concealed his identity with the communist objectives. In the year 1937 he said, "What does communism mean in the last analysis ? It means a classless society and ideal that is worth striving for."¹²⁴ Yet he told categorically, "I part company with it when force is called to aid for achieving it."¹²⁵

Thus although temperamentally Gandhi subscribed to the basic values of communist ideology he was fundamentally opposed to the communist adherence to the violent method for the attainment of the socialist objective. As far as 1924, Gandhi wrote in *Young India* : "My path is clear. Any attempt to use me for violent purpose is bound to fail. I have no secret methods. I know no diplomacy save that of truth. I have no weapon but non-violence."¹²⁶

That continued to be his life-long philosophy and he was not prepared to make any compromise in the name of an egalitarian society. On his voyage towards attainment of Truth, non-violence became his first love and that remained his last too. No dazzling vision like the ideal of an egalitarian society could create a breach in his fidelity to non-violence. In his conversation with Louis Fischer in the last week of July 1946 he said : "Whilst I have the greatest admiration for the self-denial and spirit of sacrifice, of our socialist friends, I have never concealed the sharp difference, between their method and mine. They frankly believe in violence and all that is in its bosom. I believe in non-violence through and through."¹²⁷

Thus although for Marx and other Scientific Socialists of his school, violence and bloodshed were the cause-ways to socialism, for Gandhi, non-violence held the key of the temple of Socialism.

(d) Pragmatic Approach and Non-Violent Technique

Gandhi's choice of non-violent technique for the attainment of socialism was no doubt mainly a product of his unflinching loyalty to non-violence as a creed, which dictated that it should

not be utilised or thrown out of the window depending on one's convenience, but should be strictly adhered to as a fundamental principle of life; yet Gandhi was not an impractical visionary and as per his own claim he was a practical idealist.¹²⁸ If his choice fell on the non-violent method in preference to a violent revolution it is partly because, as a pragmatist he realised that non-violence represents far better the spirit of human progress than violence, and partly because as a socialist strategist, he had the conviction that non-violence is a more potent, effective and reliable revolutionary force than violence, to bring about social change in the direction of socialism.

Although an apostle of non-violence, Gandhi as a pragmatist and a sober realist never overlooked the sterling reality that undiluted non-violence was difficult to practise in this mundane world. Certain amount of violence was almost indispensable in the day-to-day life. As he said: "Perfect non-violence is impossible so long as we exist physically for we would want some space atleast to occupy. Perfect non-violence whilst you are inhabiting the body is only a theory like Euclid's point or straight line. . . ." ¹²⁹ For one's existence, for the better or a comfortable existence, for the proliferation of one's species and for better health and sanitary surroundings, people commit violence almost every day and without hesitation. Such violent activities are almost taken for granted as a part of one's life and form almost a part of one's daily rituals. As Gandhi said: "We are helpless mortals caught in the conflagration of himsa. Man can not for a moment live without consciously or unconsciously committing outward himsa. The very fact of his living, eating, drinking and moving about necessarily involves some himsa, destruction of life, be it ever so minute." ¹³⁰

Thus life without some amount of himsa, acknowledged Gandhi, was impossible. Whether one lives in human society or in the jungle away from human habitation, one must take recourse to some amount of himsa. As he said, "In life it is impossible to eschew violence completely." ¹³¹ But Gandhi realised the futility of accentuating himsa or violence since he had the conviction that nothing of lasting benefit and of permanent value can ensue out of himsa. He was no doubt an uncompromising opponent of the violent method even for the attainment of a noble objective but his rejection of the violent

method of the communists was equally prompted by his conviction that violence can not bring in the egalitarian society based on the principles of equality, fraternity, freedom and fellowship.

Gandhi had the highest admiration for the idealism and sacrifices of people like Lenin. During his conversation with Romain Rolland on his way back from the R.T.C. the latter impressed on Gandhi, "Lenin . . . like you never compromised with Truth."¹³² Even during the War years inspite of the fact that Russia had aligned herself with the Imperialist powers, Gandhi had a soft corner for Russia because, "I can have none (ill-will) against the Russians who have done great things for the proletariat."¹³³ Even after the commencement of the Second World War, when Russia's imperialistic design had come to the open, he was not prepared to pass any uncharitable remark on its architect, Stalin. As he said, "I may not pass judgement on a great people and a great man like Stalin."¹³⁴ He said as late as 1928 : "There is no questioning the fact that the Bolshevik ideal has behind it the purest sacrifice of countless men, and women, who have given up their all for its sake and an ideal that is sanctified by the sacrifice of such master spirits as Lenin cannot go in vain; the noble example of their renunciation will be emblazoned for ever and quicken and purify the ideal as time passes."¹³⁵ Yet everything spectacular that had happened in Russia, the supremacy of the proletariat, the elimination of exploitation that he cherished so much, and the sacrifice and sufferings of Lenin, could not blur his vision that nothing of lasting value can be gained by violence and he expressed his apprehension : "Bolshevik regime in its present form can not last for long. For it is my firm conviction that nothing enduring can be built on violence."¹³⁶

It has been common knowledge that where violent technique has been adopted for initiating socialist transformation, it has yielded a bumper harvest of post-revolutionary violence, terrorism, conspiracy and cold-blooded murder and has perpetrated values and systems that put to shade all values that the socialists cherish. Marx and Engels visualised replacement of the bourgeois society by an association "in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all". But they considered violence as the mid-wife of such an idealised society and while writing the Communist Manifesto,

expressed the pious wish that the proletariat by raising themselves to the position of the ruling class shall facilitate disappearance of the bourgeois society based on clash of interests and class antagonism and pave the way for the emergence of an egalitarian society where equality, fraternity and fellowship shall reign supreme. But Marx the scientist realised later that violent revolution by itself may be inadequate to ensure ushering in of an egalitarian society. Perhaps he apprehended that the violence of the proletariat perpetrated during the process of seizure of power may whip up violence of the counter-revolutionaries and the dispossessed which in turn may warrant perpetuation of a system of violence that makes violence an institution and endows it with certain amount of socialist morality and sanctity. Accordingly in a private letter to Weydemeyer written on March 5, 1852 he expressed his conviction how dictatorship of the proletariat after violent seizure of power is essential to ensure socialist transformation. He wrote : "And now as to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society, nor yet the struggle between them . . . What I did that was new was to prove . . . that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat."¹³⁷

Lenin on whom destiny thrust the responsibility of organising and welding a revolutionary party, planning and executing its revolutionary strategy, carrying it forward to its victorious end, and shouldering the onerous duty of socialist reconstruction after violent seizure of power, grasped better than his spiritual fore-fathers that violent revolution by itself was not a sure and safe-guide to a socialist society. He wanted to make up the inadequacies of violent technique by taking recourse to and properly refashioning the dictatorship of the proletariat of the masters, to suit the conditions of resurgent Russia. Lenin writes in his 'The State and the Revolution' : "The teaching on the class struggle when applied by Marx to the question of the state and of the socialist revolution leads of necessity to the recognition of the political rule of the proletariat, of its dictatorship i.e., of power shared with none and relying directly upon the armed force of the masses . . . The proletariat needs state power, the centralised organisation of force, the organisation of violence, both to crush the resistance of the exploiters and to lead the

enormous mass of the population, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, the semi-proletarians in the work of organising socialist economy.”¹³⁸

Thus Marx and Lenin realised the inadequacy of violence to effect socialist transformation but committed the further blunder of thinking that dictatorship of the proletariat that is grounded on violence and nurtured by force and terrorism, can solve the impossible tangle arising out of violent revolution. The dictatorship of the proletariat like any other type of dictatorship throws to the four-winds, all ethical, moral, and human values and puts premium on power by any means. As Lenin expressed, “The Revolutionary Dictatorship of the Proletariat is power won and maintained by the violence of the proletariat against the bourgeois power that is unrestrained by any law.” The Dictatorship of the proletariat is therefore a reign of terror perpetrated during the transitional period by inspiring fear and adopting the technique of violent suppression of the opposition.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is characterised not only by the predominance of fear and hatred, terrorism and violence; freedom of the individual, their fraternity and fellowship are conspicuous by their absence under such a system. Speaking about the nature of such dictatorship and its relation to freedom, Lenin has said : “The dictatorship of the proletariat imposes a series of restrictions on freedom of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists. We must suppress them in order to free humanity from wage slavery, their resistance must be crushed by force; it is clear that where there is suppression, where there is violence, there is no freedom, and no democracy.”¹³⁹

When Lenin assumed the reins of power after the Revolution, he initiated such a type of dictatorship. The counter-revolution staged by the dispossessed national bourgeoisie and the capitalist powers provided him further excuses and further strengthened his conviction about the inevitability of dictatorship of the proletariat inspired by fear and force, to prop up a regime erected on the pedestal of violence. As Jawaharlal Nehru has reviewed the situation preceding the advent of the Red Terror : “What was the situation that faced Lenin and his new Bolshevik Government ? . . . all round him were representatives of the old order ready to crush the Revolution; the organisation of the state was capitalist and most of the old government servants

refused to co-operate with the new government, bankers would not give money, even the telegraph office would not send telegrams. A difficult enough situation to frighten the bravest heart Despair seized the Bolsheviks and fear and as they were going to die any how they decided to die fighting. As the young French Republic had done a century and a quarter earlier like a wild animal at bay they turned on their enemies. There was to be no more tolerance, no mercy. The whole country was put under martial law and early in September the Central Soviet Committee announced the Red Terror.”¹⁴⁰

However sensible and rational, the justification advanced in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat of Russia may appear, it does not conceal the truth, that the severity, inhumanity, brutality, tyranny, and oppression perpetrated by such dictatorship are almost unparalleled in the history of dictatorship. Lenin initiated the ruthless suppression and violent liquidation of all oppositions in the name of socialist transformation; Stalin further perfected the system of violence and oppression and elevated it to a spectacular height. As Milovan Djilas has observed : “Lenin’s dictatorship was strict, but Stalin’s dictatorship became totalitarian. The abolition of all ideological struggle in the party meant the termination of all freedom in society.”¹⁴¹

The brutalities and torture practised in Soviet Union against the dissenters was in no way inferior to the torture in the Hitlerite gas-chambers or concentration camps. The torture through beating, threat of execution, punishment of innocent friends and relations, elaborately planned and meticulously executed for decades, far surpassed any oppression, perpetrated by any tyranny in the past.

But all such cruelty, barbarism, inhumanity, and naked brutality were committed in the name of the socialist society, whose prospects of equality, fraternity and fellowship have gradually receded. As Milovan Djilas has observed, “The inhumanity of Stalin’s methods reached its greatest height when he built a Socialist Society.”¹⁴² But what is very much significant, inspite of such inhuman excesses, moral degradation and denegation of human values, the much publicised deliverance was still far off : “The classes did not disappear under the dictatorship of the proletariat and the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ did not begin to wither away.”¹⁴³

But why has the vision been blurred ? Why has the ideal receded and become difficult of attainment ? The wind of violence that was sown during the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the seizure of political power by the proletariat produced a rich harvest of whirl-wind of counter-violence, by the counter-revolutionary forces, for containing which a reign of terror and a regime of concentrated violence was perpetrated. Thus a vicious circle of violence, counter-violence, and further violence ensued till it attained a dizzy height that obscures human comprehension. The attainment of the socialist goals of equality, fraternity and fellowship thus became only a mirage. Hence as Aldus Huxley has observed : "Any reform which requires violence for its imposition, will fail to produce good results. Violence can produce only the effects of violence—counter-violence, suspicion, resentment, more violence. Violence ends liberties and has been the main cause of the rise of totalitarian and imperial tyrannies."¹⁴⁴

Gandhi, inspite of being an idealist and a visionary, had unusual practical common sense and foresight and he had grasped the mechanism of violence,—how violence breeds further violence and if this technique is adopted for the attainment of a noble end like a society based on the ega'itarian principle, the hope of attaining the objective is foredoomed to failure. He inspite of his much advertised ignorance about the real state of affairs in Soviet Union, was conscious of the way Soviet Union was moving and how real aim was being perverted and distorted in Russia because of the violent overtone of the technique. It simply confirmed the Gandhian conviction that no good can come out of evil or no orgy of violence and no dip in the pool of blood can endow the revolution with real socialist sacrosanctity. Witnessing—although from a distance—what was taking place in Russia, Gandhi wrote : "Whatever may have been the result of violent activities in other countries and without reference to the philosophy of non-violence, it does not require much intellectual effort to see that if we resort to violence, for ridding society of the many abuses which impede our progress, we shall add to our difficulties and postpone the days of freedom Has not this been happening before our eyes for the past many years of which we have still painfully vivid recollections ?"¹⁴⁵

Subsequently Gandhi wrote in *Harijan* in the later part of

1938, "Russia has a dictator who dreams of peace and thinks he will wade to it through a sea of blood. No one can say what Russian dictatorship will mean to the world."¹⁴⁶ About eight months later he expressed in categorical terms that no true Swaraj for the masses can be obtained by the application of violent means. In this connection he alluded to the state of affairs and particularly the extent of violence practised in Soviet Union and expressed that no true socialism can emerge out of it. As he wrote : "True democracy or the Swaraj of the masses can never come through untruthful and violent means for the simple reason that the natural corollary to their use would be to remove all opposition through the suppression or extermination of antagonists."¹⁴⁷

While thinking of economic equality and its practicability in India, Gandhi fixed his attention on non-violent method because the record of the violent revolution in Soviet Union did not impress him much. Rather as his informations went, the real egalitarian society was still not visible in the horizon. Hence he advised the Congress men in 1941 : "They should ask themselves how the existing inequalities can be abolished violently or non-violently. I think we know the violent way. It has not succeeded anywhere. Some claim that it has in Russia in a large measure. I doubt it. It is too early to make an unchallengeable claim."¹⁴⁸ He foresaw and rightly too that however much some people and particularly the communists may claim that the violent method was improving the lot of the people, violence shall ultimately unleash a state of chaos. As he said, "Some say there is ruthlessness in Russia but that it is exercised for the lowest and the poorest and is good for that reason. For me it has very little good in it. Some day this ruthlessness will create an anarchy, worse than we have ever seen."¹⁴⁹

Of course Gandhi understood by freedom something other than what normally western political scientists hold as dear to their hearts. He more often used the word Swaraj instead of freedom or independence, the burden of his emphasis being mere on the restrained conduct both personal and social, of the individual, rather than on the political aspect of freedom. Of course he wrote, "The word Swaraj is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint and not freedom from all restraints which 'independence' often means."¹⁵⁰ But all the

same personal liberty was too valuable for him to be completely sacrificed. Individuality of man, his personal excellences and development of his creativity, were too sacred for him. If Gandhi was opposed to Hitlerism and his sympathies were with the Allies it is partly because the latter championed the cause of freedom and liberty. According to Gandhi the greatest sin that Hitler had committed was deprivation of nations and peoples of their liberty. As he said about the shortcoming of Hitlerism, "It has robbed the small nations of their liberty."¹⁵¹

Thus liberty of the individual and personal freedom were too precious for him. Economic equality apart, his brand of socialism embraced personal freedom too, in order that socialism, his term for true Swaraj of the masses, shall have any real meaning and significance. But any attempt to build up socialism with the instrument of violence at one's command shall frustrate the whole design. Violence shall breed counter-violence and ultimately the dictatorship of the proletariat that comes to the rescue of the attempt at socialist transformation, may completely eliminate real freedom. Under such circumstances, democratic freedom, functioning of the democratic system and participation of the largest possible number of citizens in the governmental process, become mere moon-shine. As he wrote, "That does not make for individual freedom."¹⁵² Subsequently he wrote, "Good brought through force destroys individuality."¹⁵³

Thus Gandhi was convinced that an egalitarian society consistent with individual freedom and personal liberty is impossible of attainment by violence, or force. The Belgian socialist Bart de Ligt rationalising on the effect of violent revolt on socialism writes, "The more of violence, the less of revolution."¹⁵⁴ The American political scientist Mulford Sibley is also of opinion that violence prolongs the process of realisation of the real social revolution in the direction of an egalitarian society. As he has written : "All violence tends to be reactionary whatever may be the avowed objective of those who employ it. While in the long run, the effects of violence can no doubt be counteracted in some measure, it always leaves scars and such progress as is made in the direction of an egalitarian society is always achieved primarily despite violence, and not because of it."¹⁵⁵ Gandhi similarly writes : "Violence interrupts the process and prolongs the real revolution of the whole social structure."¹⁵⁶ Hence he

came round to the starting point of his philosophy that nothing good and nothing ideal, can be attained by the application of violent method. Accordingly he said : "Only truthful, non-violent and pure hearted socialist will be able to establish a socialistic society in India and the world Without the means described above the existence of such a society is impossible."¹⁵⁷

(e) Indian Heritage and Non-Violent Technique

Socialism like any plant reacts differently to different soils, and assumes its form, texture and features in conformity with the nature of the soil from which it draws its sustenance. The cultural heritage of the country, the nature and habits of the people, and the values cherished by them are transmitted to the methods and techniques adopted for socialist transformation which in the ultimate analysis determine the nature and pattern of the socialist society. Hence the methods and techniques adopted for socialist transformation vary from country to country depending on the objective situation prevailing in those countries. Marx and Engels acknowledged the possibility of such diverse ways for the attainment of socialism and their emphasis on violent technique was not a universally applicable strategy to be adopted irrespective of the cultural heritage of different countries and the state and stage of socio-economic and political system prevalent therein. They did not completely rule out adoption of a peaceful, non-violent and democratic technique in countries having democratic traditions. On the eve of the Great October Revolution, Lenin wrote : "All nations will arrive at socialism this is inevitable, but not all will do so in exactly the same way, each will contribute something of its own in one or another form of democracy, one or another variety of the dictatorship of the proletariat, one or another rate at which socialist transformation will be effected in the various aspects of social life."¹⁵⁸

Lenin had to adapt Marxism to the objective conditions prevalent in Russia and to the historical setting and cultural heritage of the country. The philosophy that was fashioned with a fully developed industrialised economy in view had to be modified to suit the objective need of an industrially backward and feudalistic economic order. The concept of Dictatorship of the Proletariat had to be modified to meet the exigencies of a

country where the Proletariat was too weak and too unorganised and consequently the dictatorship passed into the hands of the Party bosses and the Party bureaucracy. Jawaharlal Nehru while subscribing to the philosophy of socialism observed before independence that although it is inevitable that India shall march towards socialism, "That march may vary in different countries and the intermediate steps might not be the same. Nothing is so foolish as to imagine that exactly the same process takes place in different countries with varying backgrounds. India, even if she accepted this goal would have to find her own way to it for we have to avoid unnecessary sacrifice and the way of chaos which may retard our progress for a generation."¹⁵⁹

Accordingly socialist strategists in different countries have adopted techniques for attainment of socialism that are in conformity with the cultural heritage and traditions of their respective countries. Even in countries that have opted for the Communist system, the nature of their emphasis and the techniques that they adopt differ. Chinese communism differs from Russian communism, and so also the communism of the East European countries from that of the Asian countries. Hence Gandhi who was as much sincere about an egalitarian society as he was for the country's independence did not miss the rationale in the concept that Indian socialism must draw its inspiration from the cultural heritage of the Indian soil.

The panorama of India's past reveals a broad aspect of continuity and unity in variety. From the early stages of Indian civilisation, through its steady growth to its highest glory and attainment of the pinnacle of greatness, there stands the spirit of assimilation. Contact with the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Chinese, the Arabs, the Central Asians, and the people of the Mediterranean countries no doubt had its impact on the Indian culture and heritage; but instead of being overwhelmed by such foreign influences, the Indian heritage withstood them, assimilated them, and became enriched by them. The invasion of the Greeks, the Huns and the Mongols instead of shaking the Indian culture to its roots, helped it to go deeper. All these streams of foreign ideas, thoughts and culture were assimilated in the indigenous Indian culture, and made the mainstream of Indian culture, broader, deeper and richer. As Jawaharlal Nehru has observed : "There has not been such a break and there is

a definite continuity. Also from time to time vivid periods of renaissance have occurred and some of them have been long and brilliant. Always there is visible an attempt to understand and adopt the new and harmonise it with the old or at any rate with parts of the old which were considered worth preserving. Often the old retains an external form only, as a kind of symbol and changes its inner content. But some thing vital and living continues, some urge driving the people in a direction, not wholly realised, and always a desire for synthesis between the old and the new.”¹⁶⁰

This inherent dynamism, this continuity amidst contacts and confrontations, this capacity for assimilation instead of the spirit of confrontation and extermination, imparted strength and vitality to the Indian culture and heritage. That makes India the birth place of so many major religions and the country where people of different religious faiths have a harmonious get-together in the social and political milieu.

Another aspect of Indian culture and heritage that follows from the first is its passion for non-violence and emphasis on renunciation and self-suffering. Hinduism, the religious faith to which Gandhi subscribed,—although not in a dogmatic, doctrinaire and sectarian sense, with its superstitions and prejudices—is the ancient religion of the land that has survived, inspite of the assaults of sister religions and has given rise to religions like Buddhism and Jainism as attempts to reform it, and rid it of all rigidities and dogmatism. Gandhi called himself a Hindu and that too a Sanatanist Hindu because, “I believe in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas, and all that goes by the name of Hindu Scriptures.”¹⁶¹ Further he added, “I believe implicitly in the Hindu aphorism that no one truly knows the Scriptures who has not attained perfection in Innocence (Ahimsa), Truth (Satya) and Self-control and who has not renounced all acquisitions or possessions of wealth.”¹⁶² Thus the very essence of Hinduism—the most original, the indigenous and the all-pervasive religion of the land, that forms a part of Indian tradition, culture and heritage—is Truth, Ahimsa and non-possession or renunciation. Ahimsa or the recognition of the sacredness of life, has become almost the core of Hindu religion. Speaking about Gandhi’s adherence to non-violence or Ahimsa C. F. Andrews has observed: “In taking up this position

Mahatma Gandhi is neither original nor revolutionary from the Hindu stand-point; for as early as the days of the ancient Epic called Mahabharata this one virtue of Ahimsa has all along been declared by the Hindu Religion to be the perfection of religious duty. The words of the Mahabharata which may be translated 'Ahimsa is the Supreme Religion' are well known all over India."¹⁶³

Buddhism and Jainism that emerged as off-shoots of Hinduism, to rid it of its irrationalities and rigidities, are primarily doctrines whose spiritual backbones are furnished by non-violence or non-killing which on its positive side relies on compassion for all living beings, and love for them. Even the emphasis of the concept of non-violence of the Mahabharata is on love and compassion for fellow beings. As C. F. Andrews has further observed : "When we come to analyse what constitutes Ahimsa we find at once, that it is not merely a negative virtue; it involves the positive doing of good quite as much as the negative refusal to do harm. This is made clear in the same passage from the Mahabharata, which goes on to say that Ahimsa is supreme kindness and supreme self-sacrifice."¹⁶⁴

Gandhi who attained his intellectual and spiritual maturity through the life of austerity of a rational and devout Hindu, could not cast off the impact of Hinduism and particularly its emphasis on non-violence, renunciation and self-sacrifice. India was the dearest country to him, because "I have discovered the greatest good in it."¹⁶⁵ Further he said, "Everything in India attracts me. It has everything that a human being with the highest possible aspiration can want."¹⁶⁶ But he clung to Indian heritage, discovered everything good in Indian culture, and it furnished him the "spiritual nourishment" he needed, because, India's philosophy was the philosophy of non-violence. Accordingly he wrote in *Young India* in 1921 : "If India makes violence her creed and I have survived, I would not care to live in India."¹⁶⁷ No doubt independence of India was dearer to his heart. But dearer still to him was the method of non-violence and he said : "If India takes up the doctrine of the sword, she may gain momentary victory. Then India will cease to be the pride of my heart."¹⁶⁸

Gandhi believed that the message of India to the world is the message of non-violence. The Hindu concept of Ahimsa

and the Buddhist and Jaina emphasis on non-violence were the messages of India to the world prior to the advent of Jesus Christ. Therefore if Gandhi shunned violence as a technique for winning independence it was partly because of his conviction that India's message to the world in the past was the message of non-violence and it shall continue to be so in future too. As he said : "India's real message to the world is non-violence, India is saturated with that spirit If there is not this message, there is no other message that India can give."¹⁶⁹

Gandhi considered non-violence so much ingrained in Indian culture that he felt that no type of violence—individual, social, political or economic—is in conformity with it. He considered economic exploitation and social inequality as types of violence that are not in conformity with Indian culture. On the other hand as he felt, social and economic equality are inalienable parts of Indian culture and tradition. Hence as it has already been referred to earlier he considered socialism and communism as contained in the first verse of the Ishopanishad.¹⁷⁰

If socialism or egalitarian philosophy is a part of Indian heritage as contained in the precepts of Indian scriptures, Indian socialism shall adopt methods that are peculiar to India and are in conformity with the cultural heritage of Indian soil. If Indian culture rejects outright violence in every form, socialist strategy of India must equally steer clear off the path of violence and forcible seizure of state power for the sake of socialist transformation of the society and the economy. If Indian cultural heritage is characterised by a sense of continuity, a spirit of tolerance and assimilation and an aversion for the policy of extermination and liquidation the Indian socialist strategy should not break away from such cultural continuity, practise violence against the privileged class, and indulge in the extermination of the anti-socialist forces for the sake of egalitarian transformation of the society.

Gandhi rejected without reservation the violent technique adopted in Russia although he was never wanting in appreciation for the tremendous sacrifices undergone in Russia for erecting a new, rational and non-exploitative socio-economic system. While advocating in a Press Conference on May 18, 1942, employment of unadulterated non-violent non-co-operation against potential aggressors, and urging upon the people

sacrifice, even risking "loss of several million lives" he extolled the Soviet sense of sacrifice and said : "That India may not be ready to pay that price may be true. I hope that it is not true, but some such price must be paid by any country that wants to retain its independence. After all the sacrifice made by the Russians and the Chinese is enormous and they are prepared to risk all The cost is enormous."¹⁷¹ But at the same time he did not approve the violent scorched earth policy of Soviet Union during the war. As he said, "And the Russian and the Chinese examples make no appeal for me. If some other country resorts to the methods which I consider to be inhuman, I may not follow them."¹⁷²

But why did Gandhi reject the Soviet policy of violent resistance to War and the scorched earth policy ? No doubt his philosophy of non-violence prompted him to look with disfavour at the violent technique of Soviet Union; but his profound faith in the Indian heritage of non-violence was not less responsible for such denunciation of violent policy by Gandhi. During his visit to Bengal in November, 1945 when he was in Mahisadal in Midnapore district, his attention was drawn to the so-called acts of chivalry of the local people during the August Movement of 1942, who by Gandhian standards indulged in acts of violence, terrorism and incendiarism in the name of Swaraj. They had captured the thana, burnt down law courts, paralysed communications, organised a parallel police service intelligence branch, and law courts, and above all almost established a parallel government. Gandhi did not approve all that had happened. As he said : "You have graphically put in your reports how you blew up a railway track, put a road out of use, burnt a court, seized a thana, set up a parallel government, so on. This is not the technique of non-violent action."¹⁷³ While advising the people liberation from all sorts of imperialism was impossible of attainment by the "outworn" method of violent uprising, he realised that people had perhaps taken a leaf from the history of the Bolshevik Revolution and felt that such examples were not sure and safe guides for India with a different cultural background. As he said : "Let no body be misled by the Russian parallel. Our tradition is wholly different from Russia's. The historical setting too is different. In Russia the whole population was

under arms; Indian masses will not take to arms even if they could be given the necessary training.”¹⁷⁴

Gandhi was conscious that Russians had before them the objective of an egalitarian society that was so dear to his heart. They did not lack sincerity in respect of such a society and they were never hesitant to make the necessary sacrifice. Yet the type of terror and violence to which Russian Communism was accustomed might have been a part of Russian tradition but not that of India. Russia during the Tsarist regime had the experience of brutality and violence on an unprecedented scale. Oppression had almost become a part of Russian culture and tradition to which the people had become acclimatised. The terror and violence perpetrated by the Bolsheviks after the Revolution were therefore nothing unusual; rather it was in conformity with the cultural heritage of Russia. But India with a completely different cultural setting need not imitate Russia. As Gandhi said in 1937 : “Communism of the Russian type, that is communism which is imposed on a people would be repugnant to India.”¹⁷⁵ Therefore during his conversation with Louis Fischer while he claimed to be a Communist, he asserted without reservation that Russian or Stalin brand of communism, would not succeed in India.¹⁷⁶ Perhaps he had the conviction that Indian people with a different cultural heritage and particularly the heritage of non-violence or ahimsa, would reject the Stalinist type of communism or socialism.

Communist ideal in the ultimate analysis represented the values that Gandhi cherished and held dear to his heart. Many communists were quite intimate with him and some of them were like sons to him.¹⁷⁷ He was vociferous in acclaiming the sacrifices of many communists but what repelled him from making common cause with them was its emphasis on violence that was against the spirit of Indian culture and heritage. By their trouble making and contribution to violence in the country the communists according to Gandhi were going against the Indian heritage. That apart they were drawing sustenance for their philosophy from Russia, forgetting completely their own heritage. This transplantation of foreign ideas or methods on Indian soil to solve Indian problems was repugnant to Gandhi. Accordingly he said on the occasion of the A.I.C.C. meeting on September 23, 1946 : “... They (Communists) seem to take

their instructions from Russia, whom they regard as their spiritual home rather than India. I can not countenance this dependence on an outside power. I have said that we should not depend even on the Russian wheat in our present food crisis. We must have the ability and courage to subsist on what our soil can give us rather than depend on the foreign charity. Otherwise we shall not deserve to exist as an independent country. And the same applies to foreign ideologies. I would accept them only to the extent that I can assimilate them and adapt them to Indian scene. But I must refuse to go under them.”¹⁷⁸ Later when a group of communists met him on June 8, 1947 he told them : “You profess lofty principles but your conduct belies them, because you seem to make no distinction between truth and falsehood, justice and injustice. What to me is even more pathetic is that you regard Russia as your spiritual home. Despising Indian culture, you dream of planting the Russian system here. Food however rich that another person eats cannot sustain me. I can be sustained only by what I eat. In the same way what an outside power does, gives me no satisfaction as it seems to give you.”¹⁷⁹

Thus Gandhi as a pragmatist was convinced that his socialism or Indian socialism, shall sprout from the cultural heritage of India, assume the colour, texture, lustre and luxuriance derived from the nature of Indian soil, and adopt a technique for the socialist transformation of its economy that is in conformity with the cultural tradition and national heritage of India. Any attempt to divorce it from the cultural heritage shall give a distorted look to the system. Since non-violence and continuity formed the very life-blood of Indian cultural tradition and heritage, the technique for socialist transformation of India must necessarily be non-violent and there should not be any break away from such technique.

To sum up, if Gandhian adherence to the doctrine of purity of means, his realisation of the futility of adoption of violent technique and his profound faith in the cultural heritage of the soil to shape the socialist strategy of any country and particularly that of India are the determining factors in his rejection of the violent technique for socialist transformation, they pushed him to the apex of his philosophical adherence to the doctrine that non-violence is the most potent and militant strategy for effecting

such transformation. If Gandhian socialism derived its inspiration from non-violence, non-violence provides the most effective technique for the attainment of the end.

TECHNIQUE OF CONVERSION INSTEAD OF COERCION

Gandhi was a practical idealist. He not only advocated like a visionary that non-violent technique should be adopted for effecting socialist transformation; as a practical idealist he indicated the manner and the method of applying the technique.

Gandhi like Marx was convinced that the wealth of the rich, accumulation of the assets of the capitalist, and the prosperity of the privileged class, were the direct and necessary concomitants of exploitation of millions and violence committed against them, and no vision of an egalitarian society is conceivable so long this exploitation and violence are tolerated. In his conversation with the Young Communists in 1931 when he was in England in connection with the Round Table Conference, he said categorically that the Indian Princes, landlords, mill-owners and money-lenders were minting money by exploiting the masses.¹⁸⁰ Writing in *Young India* Gandhi said, "Every palace that one sees in India is a demonstration not of her riches, but of the insolence of power that riches give to the few who owe them to the miserably requited labours of the millions of the paupers of India."¹⁸¹ He particularly developed a stiff attitude towards the capitalist system of exploitation and had cultivated a firm conviction that no egalitarian society, no true *Swaraj*, nor the *Ramrajya* of his conception are conceivable, until and unless this exploitation ceases. Writing in the *Harijan* on August 13, 1938, Gandhi said: "The Congress which aims at securing full justice, for the famishing millions, can not favour capitalism."¹⁸² Writing on April 29, 1947, while he emphasised on the economic apart from the political aspect of independence, he harped on the elimination of capitalism. As he wrote: "Economic (economic freedom) means, entire freedom from the British capitalists and capital as also their Indian counterpart."¹⁸³

But although Gandhi desired to solve the same problem that arrested the attention of Marx, he tried to solve it in his own

peculiar Gandhian way. Instead of advocating like Marx fomentation of hatred, class-antagonism, class-conflict and violent civil war, he pleaded for the application of his grand remedy, the non-violent technique. Unlike Marx, Gandhi did not advocate elimination or liquidation of the capitalists. On the other hand, addressing a labour meeting in Bombay which was disturbed by some young communists he said : "I must warn you that I do not bear any ill-will to the capitalists; I can think of doing them no harm."¹⁸⁴ But it should not be misconstrued that Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence made him docile enough to extend his acquiescence in capitalistic exploitation, nor should it be presumed that his philosophy of non-violence so much emasculated his socialistic fervour that he was afraid of any fight.

Radivoj Uvalic, Professor of Political Economy, University of Belgrade and former Yugoslav Ambassador to India has observed : "Gandhi's non-violence was not a fatalism in that one had merely to forego violence and things would happen as they should happen."¹⁸⁵ Hence resistance is inherent in the Gandhian concept of non-violence. Gandhi was an advocate of non-violence no doubt but not of the non-violence of the weak and the coward; rather his non-violence comprehended intolerance of all violences that exist in any sphere, whether political, social or economic, and resistance is but inherent in his concept of non-violence. As an apostle of non-violence, he had philosophic aversion for fights that emanate from ill-will and hatred and that may lead to violence and bloodshed; but all the same, he was a determined fighter against prevalence of violence in any form any where. Accordingly he said : "Non-violence is not a 'resignation from all real fighting against wickedness'. On the contrary the non-violence of my conception is a more active and real fight against wickedness than retaliation whose very nature is to increase wickedness."¹⁸⁶

Thus Gandhi's non-violence is not a plea for meek submission to the dictates of the evil-doers, villains or tyrants; rather he advocated putting up stiff resistance against the tyranny of tyrants, and exploiters. Militancy is not only inherent in such a concept of violence; it becomes almost an objective necessity. It assumes a form of aggressiveness which does not fall short of aggressiveness of the tyrants except by virtue of its firm

adherence to the principle of non-injury to opponents. As Gandhi writes, "Non-violence presupposes ability to strike."¹⁸⁷ Of course Gandhi's concept of non-violence does not embrace within its scope, the spirit of ill-will or vengeance; yet he would even prefer aggressiveness to meek submission to evil. As he said, non-violence meant, "a conscious, deliberate restraint put upon one's desire for vengeance. But vengeance is any day superior to passive, effeminate and helpless submission."¹⁸⁸ Thus Gandhi's non-violence is an extremely dynamic and revolutionary force that rejects outright acquiescence in evil and submission to weakness, and cowardice. He wrote in *Harijan* later, "Non violence and cowardice go ill together."¹⁸⁹

Thus although non-violence was according to Gandhi the panacea for all evils, mundane and extra-mundane, injustices, social, economic and political, and he considered non-violence infinitely superior to violence and forgiveness as more manly than punishment, yet when he had to choose between violence and cowardice, his preference was always on the side of the former. Accordingly he wrote in *Young India* : "I do believe that where there is a choice between cowardice and violence I would advise violence. I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour."¹⁹⁰

Subsequently while advising the people of different communities and particularly Hindus and Muslims to let non-violence govern their social relationship and accept it "as their final creed" he urged upon them, not to view his concept of non-violence as a moribund, and static philosophy of the meek. As he said : "My non-violence, does not admit of running away from danger and leaving the dear ones unprotected. Between violence and cowardly flight, I can only prefer violence to cowardice. I can no more, preach non-violence to a cowardly man than I can tempt a blind man to enjoy healthy scenes. Non-violence is the summit of bravery."¹⁹¹

Hence resistance to evil and fight against injustice is an inalienable part of the Gandhian creed of non-violence. Gandhi made this creed of non-violence, a militant and revolutionary doctrine, and it provided him the strategy to effect socialist transformation. That provided the rationale for offering stiff

resistance to capitalist evil and exploitation and ending such exploitation and such evil. But Gandhi completely ruled out the question of elimination or liquidation of the capitalists by violent methods and fomentation of class-antagonism and class-war, partly because he felt that it is against Indian tradition, partly because it is not in the interest of socialism of affluence, and partly because, he was convinced that the egalitarian society can be better secured by the conversion of the capitalists than by coercion.

Gandhi was of opinion that the Indian cultural heritage completely ruled out class-antagonism and class-war. Swami Vivekananda of the Ramakrishna order, who is acclaimed more as a Hindu religious reformer than a social scientist, with his compassion for the underdogs, while advocating ridding the Indian social system of the canker of exploitation, took precaution to say, "But then you must take care not to set up class strife between the poor peasants, the labouring people, and the wealthy classes. Make it a point not to abuse the wealthy classes."¹⁹² In line with this tradition Gandhi also writes: "Class war is foreign to the essential genius of India, which is capable of evolving communism on the fundamental rights of all on equal justice. Ramrajya of my dream ensures rights alike of prince and pauper."¹⁹³ He even went ahead and assured the privileged section of the society, "you may be sure that I shall throw the whole weight of my influence in preventing class war. Supposing that there is an attempt unjustly to deprive you of your property, you will find me fighting on your side."¹⁹⁴

Of course Gandhi did not miss the point that the privileges of the privileged must go and the exploitation of the masses must cease so as to pave the way for the emergence of an egalitarian society. Hence he said: "Today there is a conflict of interest between the capitalist and the worker because the former dreams of profits of lakhs of rupees without giving anything to worker. I would stop the capitalists from doing so."¹⁹⁵ But as a pragmatist Gandhi believed that accentuation of hatred, class-antagonism, and class-war between the capitalists and the labour leading to complete elimination and liquidation of the capitalists, shall fail to meet the needs of an egalitarian society. No socialist system, not even the Gandhian system of socialism, Sarvodaya or Ramrajya is conceivable with a certain measure

of material affluence. A socialist system no doubt is inconceivable without elimination of capitalistic exploitation, greed and profiteering; but it can not completely do away with capital and the initiative and enterprise to initiate, manage and run socialist economic enterprises. For the growth and development of a socialist system of affluence, entrepreneurship is as much an objective necessity as it is under capitalism. The socialist economic system must be efficiently operated so as to make it a viable productive mechanism earning enough of dividends for the socialist society. There is need for accumulation of capital if not capitalistic evil, profit if not profiteering, and enough of dividends, although not to fatten the purse of a few capitalists but for equitable distribution in the society. But they in turn require a knack, an uncommon capacity, to manage and make the system productive and remunerative. The New Economic Policy of Lenin took cognisance of the useful role of the Kulaks and the traders during the transitional period, although during the first flush of the Revolution, attempts were made to completely liquidate the former privileged classes.

Gandhi realised that for ushering in an era of socialism of affluence, the knacks and the talents of capitalists, and the monied class may be taken advantage of. They may be tied to the chariot of socialism; they may be made to serve the interests of the socialist system instead of being liquidated, the socialist system being deprived of their services, and the economy having been left in a state of chaos and disorganisation. Gandhi posed the problem how can economic equality be brought about? "Non-violently or should the wealthy be dispossessed of their possessions? To do this we would naturally have to resort to violence. This violent action can not benefit society. Society will be poorer, for it will lose the gifts of a man, who knows how to accumulate wealth. Therefore the non-violent way is evidently superior."¹⁹⁶

Thus Gandhi did not like to kill the goose that lays golden eggs, rather he wanted to tame and domesticate it in the house of socialism. Accentuation of class antagonism and class conflict, leading to violent civil war and overthrow and liquidation of the capitalists, the privileged, and the bourgeoisie, is thus ruled out. The privileged section of the society of the pre-socialist stage may be made to subserve the objective of an

egalitarian society by the application of non-violent peaceful and persuasive method, the method of conversion. A violent shaking of the existing system, a complete overturning of the existing organisations, and uprooting of the people from the cultural heritage of the soil were thus foreign to Gandhi's notion of socialism. As Jawaharlal Nehru has observed: "Gandhiji always sought to function, within the social fabric, in which the masses, had been living for centuries and tried to bring about, gradual but revolutionary changes, instead of destroying the fabric or uprooting the people from the soil. He insisted on continuity with the past and he accepted the existing social system as a base for his political and social strategy."¹⁹⁷

Gandhi's inspirer Leo Tolstoy in his anxiety to see a better world, prescribed: "Do not forget that what we all want in common, is the union of men and that this union can never be attained by means of violence. It is enough that every one should observe the law of love and this union will then be realised without the need to seek for it."¹⁹⁸ Gandhi himself realised that a better, saner, just and more non-exploitative world can be established if violence as a method of effecting such a changeover is cast aside, fomentation of class antagonism, class conflict, and violent civil war are given burials that they deserve, and the socialists repose their faith in unadulterated non-violence and conversion of the capitalists instead of their liquidation.

This conversion of capitalists so as to make them amenable to the high objectives of an egalitarian society was never considered by Gandhi as a highly theoretical proposition; on the contrary it was treated as a reasonably practical one. This can be done by stimulating their passion for renouncing their privileges, that create barriers between them and the rest of the society and stand as impediments for the realisation of an egalitarian society. Gandhi realised that although most of the capitalists behave selfishly, act irrationally and rarely hesitate to exploit the rest of the society for private gain, yet if an attempt is made to drive home to them, the irrationality and inhumanity involved in their policy of exploitation and amassing wealth at the expense of the starving millions, they will respond quite favourably, and renounce their privileges, thereby paving the way for the realisation of an egalitarian society.

Gandhi believed that every individual contains divine spark, and a sense of social susceptibility and an impulse for self-sacrifice are inherent in each individual which although very often remain dormant can be aroused by deliberate effort. He noticed in each individual the capacity to rise above a sense of private profit, personal gain and petty prejudice and react favourably to the efforts of persuasion to renounce privileges for the sake of social good. No individual he felt, is an incorrigible devil and no human being is so bad as to be beyond redemption. As Richard B. Gregg has observed : "Except for a few congenital mental defectives every person has in him some tiny spark of potentiality of goodness. This is true no matter how encrusted that potentiality may be with habitual pride, prejudice, hatred, callousness, cruelty or criminality."¹⁹⁹

Gandhi pleaded that the philosophy of selfless existence is a part of Hindu philosophy and Indian cultural heritage. As he felt, cultural heritage of India enjoins upon all to enjoy life through renunciation, through sharing of one's wealth with one's neighbours.²⁰⁰ Even Gandhi pointed out that renunciation of wealth after attaining certain stage and certain age in life is an injunction of Hindu conception of different Ashramas in the life of a man. The Hindus for example are enjoined to embrace Banaprastha, by renouncing the world after they attain certain age and after the fulfilment of certain family responsibilities. Hence Gandhi said : "For a Hindu it was the usual thing at a certain stage. Every good Hindu is expected after living a household life for a certain period, to enter upon a life of non-possession or poverty."²⁰¹

Gandhi further felt that the essential difference between man and the brute is that the former is capable of responding to the call of reason and spirit, renouncing his passions and shedding his selfishness, whereas the brute has no such capability.²⁰² Hence he developed the conviction that if the technique of persuasion is applied against the capitalists and the privileged section of the society, the conflicts of interests between the haves and the have-nots, the privileged and the under-privileged with recourse to civil war, violence and bloodshed shall be resolved in no time. He firmly believed that the privileged section shall react favourably to the act of conversion and thereby pave the way to the emergence of an egalitarian society. Hence he wrote :

"In the application of the method of non-violence one must believe in the possibility of every person however depraved being reformed under humane and skilled treatment. We must appeal to the good in human beings and expect response."²⁰³

SOCIALISM THROUGH SATYAGRAHA

Gandhi in conformity with his fundamental concept of identification of end and means, found a panacea for all ills mundane and extra-mundane, in the technique of Satyagraha. Stephen Hobhouse in his assessment of the Gandhian technique of non-violence and Satyagraha has observed : "Gandhi's great and closely related ideals of Ahimsa and Satyagraha, appear to me to present the only means by which salvation and redemption, healing and true life, can come to the sorely distracted and diseased environment in which we find ourselves."²⁰⁴

Gandhi anchored his faith on Satyagraha as the universally applicable means for ridding the world of all ills, inequality, injustice and exploitation not excluded. It is not only the universally applicable means but an infallible means whose application endows the user with sure success. Accordingly he writes : "That I do say fearlessly and firmly that every worthy object can be achieved by the use of Satyagraha. It is the highest and infallible means, the greatest force. Socialism will not be reached by any other means. Satyagraha can rid society of all evils, political, economic and moral."²⁰⁵

If Satyagraha has been adopted by Gandhi as the technique for socialist transformation how this technique shall operate and through what media ? How can Satyagraha succeed in resolving the contradictions of an inegalitarian society, a society that is suffering from the malady of exploitation, wants, misery, deprivation and destitution of many in face of accumulation of wealth by a handful of people that is disproportionate to their essential needs and their desert ? According to Gandhi if Satyagraha is practised in personal life as a guiding principle of individual's conduct and is applied as a strategy in the social scale against the pre-socialist, and non-socialist forces, it shall help emergence of an egalitarian society.

A seeker after Truth or true Satyagrahi, shall according to Gandhi have unflinching devotion towards God and draw inspi-

ration and sustenance from God and Divine Laws. Such seekers after Truth with devotion to and reliance on God shall never be tempted to accumulate wealth that is at the root of economic inequality and social injustice. As Gandhi observed : "Possession implied, provision for the future. A Seeker after Truth, a follower of the law of Love can not hold anything against, tomorrow. God never stores for the morrow; He never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment. If therefore we repose faith in His Providence, we should rest assured, that He will give us everyday, our daily bread meaning everything that we require. Our ignorance or negligence of the Divine Law, which gives to man from day to day his daily bread and no more has given rise to inequalities with all the miseries attendant upon him."²⁰⁶ Thus true Satyagrahis by their very nature of reliance on God shall refrain from accumulation and thus pave the way for the end of exploitation and redemption of the misery of millions. This shall lead to an egalitarian society or socialism.

Gandhi prescribed for the Satyagrahis or the inmates of his Satyagraha Ashram observance of certain rules of conduct or certain vows that would make them true Satyagrahis. The five cardinal vows are Truth, Ahimsa, Non-possession, Non-stealing and Brahmacharya or chastity. "The last four" it is said "are the natural corollaries to, and flow from the first".²⁰⁷ Thus for the attainment of Truth, the Satyagrahi apart from strictly adhering the Truth, must adopt Non-violence, Non-possession, Non-stealing and Brahmacharya as the cardinal principles of his life.

Since Truth and Ahimsa are treated as synonyms by Gandhi, a true Satyagrahi can not but be a follower of non-violence; rather as it has already been indicated, non-violence is one of the cardinal principles of a Satyagrahi. But neither economic exploitation of man by man nor accumulation of wealth is conceivable without violence. Conversely speaking if violence is given a go by from the society, and the social and economic systems are grounded on non-violence, exploitation and accumulation must end. Thus, non-violence that furnishes the key to Truth, presupposes an egalitarian society devoid of exploitation. A Satyagrahi can not tolerate an exploitative system, whose hall mark is violence. An egalitarian society therefore is a necessary

concomitant of the Satyagrahi's faith in non-violence.

A Satyagrahi must practise, non-stealing according to Gandhi. Stealing is inconsistent with Truth, and a lover of Truth and a seeker after Truth can never steal. Non stealing for him is "implicit in Truth". "It is impossible" he said "that a person should steal and simultaneously claim to know Truth or cherish Love".²⁰⁸ But Gandhi went beyond the ordinary concept of stealing when he prescribed Non-stealing as one of the cardinal principles of a Satyagrahi. Acquisition of another's property without his knowledge is no doubt a theft; but acquisition of things that one does not require for one's immediate need is a theft of serious and graver nature. Gandhi during his early days of public life in India said : "I suggest that we are thieves in a way. If I take anything that I do not need for my own immediate use and keep it I thief it from some body else."²⁰⁹

Such attitude to theft was almost his life-long companion. Accordingly Gandhi writes, "It is theft to take something from another even with his permission if we have no real need of it It is theft for me to take any fruit that I do not need or to take it in a large quantity, than is necessary."²¹⁰ In his last testament on theft he writes, "Whoever appropriates more than the minimum that is really necessary for him is guilty of theft."²¹¹ Thus like Proudhon who considered all property as theft Gandhi considered acquisition of all surplus beyond one's basic minimum and absolute necessity as an act of theft.

But this acquisition in excess of one's basic minimum according to Gandhi is at the root of the misery of millions. He was of the opinion that Nature produces enough for the satisfaction of the wants of all. It is because some people acquire more than what they need for the satisfaction of their immediate and urgent wants that there is scarcity for the rest, so much of human miseries in the world, and so much of economic inequality and social injustice. Economic inequality and social injustice are therefore the off-shoots of the prevailing atmosphere of theft that afflicts the society. As he said, "So long as we have got this inequality so long we are thieving."²¹² In another context he said, "Much of the distressing poverty in this world has arisen out of breaches of the principle of non-stealing."²¹³ If the Gandhian concept of stealing or acquisition of superfluous things is at the root of inequality and human

misery, cessation of such acquisition, or non-stealing shall necessarily promote the emergence of an egalitarian society. Thus non-stealing that is one of the cardinal principles of a Satyagrahi paves the way for an egalitarian society.

From Gandhi's concept of non-stealing follows his concept of non-possession that is another cardinal principle of his concept of Satyagraha. As he said, "Non-possession is allied to Non-stealing."²¹⁴ A Satyagrahi dedicated to non-stealing can not hold on to surplus and superfluous wealth or property and he must cast it aside. Hence a Satyagrahi can not himself acquire more than his basic minimum without stealing and if he has inherited such superfluous wealth, he must renounce it or practise non-possession. A Satyagrahi in the true sense of the term shall therefore practise non-possession.

Greed for wealth and passion for possession, militate against an egalitarian society. They lie at the root of stealing, violence and exploitation. They make equality, fraternity and sharing of prosperity impossible. The passion for possession leads to accumulation, misery and an inegalitarian society. If non-possession is practised one of the road-block on the way to socialism is removed. As Gandhi writes, "The rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need, and which are therefore neglected and wasted, while millions are starved to death for want of sustenance. If each retained possession only of what he needed, no one would be in want and all would live in contentment."²¹⁵

Gandhi's concept of not-possession treated possession beyond one's absolute need as a crime and a Satyagrahi with the objective of non-possession in view can not enjoy things that can not be enjoyed in common with the rest of the community. As he said, "Possession seems to be a crime : I can only possess certain things when I know that others, who also want to possess similar things, are able to do so."²¹⁶ Thus the sharing of prosperity and an egalitarian society are inherent in his concept of non-possession.

Gandhi was nothing if he was not a perfectionist. Non-possession that he advocated, is applicable not only to material wealth or property; even the body that one possesses was considered by him as possession and a true Satyagrahi according to Gandhi shall view it in this light. As he said, "From the

standpoint of pure Truth the body too is a possession.”²¹⁷ Therefore the ideal concept of non-possession would take cognisance of body as a possession which can be renounced in the social context if the body is considered as an engine meant for social service and used for the same purpose. Accordingly he said, “We thus arrive at the ideal of total renunciation and learn to use the body for the purpose of service so long as it exists, so much so that service and not bread, becomes with us the staff of life. We eat and drink, sleep and wake for service alone.”²¹⁸ Explaining the reason for his desire to live upto the age of 125 he wrote in the Harijan, “The human body is meant solely for service, never for indulgence”²¹⁹ Thus non-possession understood in both the senses, i.e., non-possession of one’s surplus and superfluous wealth and utilisation of one’s mental and physical strength and vigour for rendering service to the community, shall lead to reduction of inequality and establishment of an egalitarian society.

A Satyagrahi must lay equal emphasis on Brahmacharya. A Satyagrahi or lover of Truth, must accept non-violence as the means for the attainment of Truth, but non-violence conceived in the positive sense presupposes love. As Gandhi writes “Ahimsa means universal love.”²²⁰ But if one has a wife and a family, his love gets circumscribed. He is entangled in the problems of the family and his love has no scope to look beyond it. “As a faithful wife must be prepared to sacrifice her all for the sake of her husband, and a faithful husband for the sake of his wife, it is clear that such persons can not rise to the height of Universal Love, or look upon all mankind as kith and kin.”²²¹

Besides, a family man with a variety of obligations towards different members of the family shall have a natural propensity to possess and accumulate wealth at the expense of the community. But as Gandhi writes, “Realisation of Truth through self-gratification should . . . appear a contradiction in terms.”²²²

Hence Brahmacharya is recommended by Gandhi as an aspect of personal conduct of the Satyagrahi so that he is better fitted to serve the community and looks beyond the self and the limited circle of family. Such a Satyagrahi shall love and serve the entire community. He shall be self-less and shall

renounce possession that is at the root of all exploitation and inequality. Thus the Gandhian concept of Brahmacharya that is an aspect of the character of the Satyagrahi has meant to serve the cause of human fraternity and universal love that constitute the essence of socialism.

To sum up, socialism or the picture of an egalitarian society, is almost embedded in the Gandhian concept of Satyagraha. Satyagrahis who adopt Truth, Non-violence, Non-stealing, Non-possession and Brahmacharya as cardinal principles of their life can not but be socialists. If people adopt Satyagraha as the philosophy of their life and the principle of their action, socialism shall automatically descend down into the society. Thus practice of the Gandhian principle of Satyagraha carried to its farthest end shall inevitably lead to an egalitarian society. As it has been observed : "What Gandhiji had in mind, was the organisation of society—its economy, its political and social system in accordance with the principles of Satyagraha. A society based on such principles was the ideal society of his conception."²²³ Thus Satyagraha forms the basis of Gandhian socialism.

But Gandhi as a pragmatist realised that it is a day-dream to expect that all shall be inspired by the ideal of Satyagraha and practise in their own lives, Truth, Non-violence, Non-stealing, Non-possession and Brahmacharya that are the cardinal principles of Satyagraha. Immersed in selfishness many may not be able to see the light from within and cherish the values of non-stealing and non-possession that form the core of his concept of socialism. He said in connection with the perfect fulfilment of the ideal of non-possession : "Only the fewest possible if any at all, can reach this ideal."²²⁴ That according to him is also true of fulfilment of the rest of the cardinal principles of Satyagraha.

Hence how to put an end to social and economic inequality and injustice and bring about an egalitarian society? Gandhi as an activist and a social revolutionary but at the same time an apostle of non-violence and a lover of Truth or Satya, switched on to Satyagraha as a technique for application in the social scale for ridding the society of privileges and exploitation, and initiating social revolution. As it has been observed : "What is unique in Gandhiji's doctrine (Doctrine of Satyagraha) is that

he puts it forward as a technique for the removal of ills which affect society and for bringing about desirable social changes.”²²⁵

Satyagraha, when applied as a technique for social change is a sane and civilized method. As Gandhi said, “Our motto must ever be conversion by gentle persuasion and constant appeal to the head and the heart.”²²⁶ Speaking particularly in the context of the non-violent technique for improving the lot of those who were suffering under grinding poverty Gandhi said: “If it is to be brought about by non-violent means it can only be done by education both of the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots.’”²²⁷ Satyagraha therefore is a double edged tool that cuts both ways. To start with, it acts through a process of education that tries to convert both the haves and the have-nots so that the former practise non-stealing and non-possession and renounce wealth, and the latter become conscious of their right to a better living and a better future and assert such right and obtain their fulfilment thereby paving the way for an egalitarian society.

In respect of the education of the haves so that they become instruments of socialist transformation Gandhi himself started the process by urging upon the rich and the privileged classes to realise the essence of the Divine Law that God the creator also endows each with his means of subsistence. Those who would grasp the essence of it, he urged, would be reluctant to acquire more than their basic need and if they happen to possess some superfluous wealth, they would renounce it for the sake of the society. Accordingly Gandhi wrote, “Our ignorance or negligence of the Divine Law which gives to man from day to day his daily bread and no more, has given rise to inequalities, with all the miseries, attendant upon them.”²²⁸

Gandhi urged upon the privileged section of the society that enjoyment through renunciation is the very essence of Indian heritage. The first verse of the Ishopanishad enjoined upon the Hindus to consider enjoyment as the reward for renunciation. Explaining the essence of the verse he said: “And when a man has performed that act of renunciation, and dedication, he derives from that act the right of eating, drinking, clothing and housing himself to the extent necessary for his daily life. Therefore, take it as you like either in the sense that the enjoyment or use is the reward of renunciation or that the

renunciation is the condition of enjoyment, renunciation is essential for our very existence, for our soul."²²⁹ Hence real enjoyment according to Gandhi consists not in accumulating wealth for personal gratification but in renouncing it and devoting them for the welfare of the community. Life's real worth lies not in indulgence but in its capacity to renounce one's own comfort, or possession for the sake of the rest in the society. As he writes : "The secret of happy life lies in renunciation. Renunciation is life. Indulgence spells, death . . . Renunciation made for the sake of such service, is an ineffable joy of which none can deprive one because that nectar springs from within and sustains life . . . without this joy, long life is impossible and would not be worth while even if possible."²³⁰

Besides his attempt to persuade the wealthy and the privileged section of the community that real happiness consists in renunciation for the sake of others, Gandhi pleaded that possession of wealth apart from being the source of unhappiness, grips the possessor with anxiety for its retention and upkeep against theft or burglary and thereby adds to the agony of the possessor. As he pointed out : "The rich should ponder well as to what is their duty to-day. They who employ mercenaries to guard their wealth, may find those very guardians turning on them."²³¹

Thus Gandhi felt that property or possession in the midst of poverty, want, misery and starvation is too unsafe, and the way of escape according to him consists in renunciation. Hence he said : "I therefore suggest that my advice that moneyed men may earn their crores, (honesty of course) but so as to dedicate them to the service of all is perfectly sound . . . It is the surest method to evolve a new order of life of universal benefit in the place of the present one where each one lives for himself without regard to what happens to his neighbour."²³²

Gandhi was fairly conscious that the privileged section may not be convinced or may refuse to be convinced by the arguments that their real happiness consists in renunciation and not in accumulation of superfluous wealth. Under the spell of a false notion of happiness and overwhelmed by greed they may continue to mint money at the expense of the poor and the down-trodden thereby perpetuating the inegalitarian society. Hence he urged upon the capitalists and the privileged class to realise that the workers are as much responsible for production

as the entrepreneurs or the capitalists and they have as much right to a decent living standard as themselves. Hence he said : "To-day there is a conflict of interest between the capitalist and the worker because the former dreams of profits of lakhs of rupees without giving anything to the worker. I would stop the capitalists from doing so. I have told them particularly in Ahmedabad, that they must regard the workers as partners. I say to them : 'You bring your capital into the concern, they bring their only capital their person.' When the Ahmedabad mill owners came to me for a wage cut, I told them 'It is true you have a right to your interest, but just you must guarantee the men's wages'." ²³³

Gandhi the pragmatist, realised that however rational and convincing the arguments may be, some of the wealthy may still remain hesitant to shed their possession and still find pleasure in accumulation of wealth. Knowing fully well that they won't require so much wealth for their own basic need or for the creature comfort of their children and their dependents they may still hold on to it. In spite of it Gandhi was firm in his faith that an egalitarian society can be brought about by harnessing the forces of love rather than hatred. Accordingly he said : "But what am I to advise those who are already wealthy or who would not shed the desire for wealth ? I can only say to them that they should use their wealth for service" ²³⁴

Thus Gandhi suggested that those of the capitalists who are hesitant to part with their property may still act as instruments of socialist transformation if they imbibe the spirit of Trusteeship and act as Trustees of the community for their superfluous wealth. Hence he wrote : "Indeed at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of the trusteeship of the wealthy for the superfluous wealth possessed by them." ²³⁵

The wealthy and the capitalists may still hold their riches, may still get the satisfaction of being rich; yet by their role as trustees, treating their own superfluous wealth beyond their basic minimum as the welfare of the community and spending it for the welfare of the community, they can act as catalytic agents of egalitarian society. Thus Gandhi believed that, through non-violent method, through application of the method of persuasion, through the education of the haves and the wealthy, they may be made to renounce their wealth and act as

trustees, thereby paving the path to the shrine of socialism.

But if inspite of all persuasions, they fail to grasp the rationale in the argument and are hesitant to act as trustees, or as catalytic agents of socialism how to make socialism a reality with the help of non-violent method ? Gandhi prescribes that the have-nots may be educated to adopt the technique of Satyagraha, the technique of civilised resistance and non-violent revolution to effect such changeover.

Gandhi was not a pacifist nor a fatalist so as to wait or advise the workers and peasants to wait till the rich and the wealthy, the bourgeoisie and the big-business, see reason and realise their duty towards the community. Their self-interest may impell the privileged class to bury their head like ostrich in the sand of unreason or selfishness and they may, not only not act as catalytic agents of socialist transformation but may even provide positive resistance to the progress in that direction. As Martin Luther King observed : "No one gives up his privileges without strong resistances."²³⁶ Should the workers and peasants, the poor and the down-trodden, the exploited and the disinherited, wait till Dooms Day for the conversion of the rich so that their lot shall improve ? Gandhi the pragmatist realised the position and wrote, "By the non-violent method we seek not to destroy the capitalists, we seek to destroy capitalism. We invite the capitalist to regard himself as a trustee for those on whom he depends for the making, the retention and the increase of his capital. Nor need the worker wait for his conversion."²³⁷

Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence and the technique of Satyagraha as indicated earlier are not a weak man's or a coward's refuge for inaction, but a brave man's tools for facing odd situations. Resistance is inherent in them. As William Robert Miller has observed : "Non-violence can not be christianly used to dodge responsibility; its God-given function is not evasive but redemptive. The exponent of non-violence can not just mind his own business and fulfil his faith merely by engaging in non-violence when violence happens to cross his path."²³⁸

Of course it is true that Satyagraha proceeds from a spirit of love and not hatred As Gandhi said : "It is never the intention of a Satyagrahi to embarrass the wrong doer. . . The Satyagrahi's object is to convert not to coerce the wrong-

doer.”²³⁹ Of course it involves the exercise of restraint and patience; yet “it requires also resoluteness of will. This method is to refuse to be party to the wrong.”²⁴⁰

Hence the underdogs, the have-nots, and the underprivileged must be prepared to give resistance to the privileged and must refuse to be parties to exploitation. Gandhi realised that the rich and the wealthy exploit the poor, mint money out of the latter’s distress, because the poor and the exploited acquiesce in such acts of exploitation. The acquiescence may be overt or covert, tacit or implied, but all the same exploitation becomes possible because of the acquiescence of the poor and the exploited in this act of exploitation. During his discussion with young communists that took place in England in 1931, when he was there in connection with the Second Round Table Conference he said, “No person can amass wealth without the co-operation willing or forced of the people concerned.”²⁴¹ Later on he said, “All exploitation, is based on co-operation, willing or forced of the exploited. However much we may detest admitting it, the fact remains that there would be no exploitation if people refuse to obey the exploiter.”²⁴² Writing in *Harijan* still later, he aired the same opinion, “The rich can not accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in society.”²⁴³

If acquiescence of the poor and the down-trodden with the act of exploitation practised by the rich is at the root of their own misery, it is because they are mechanically drawn to such a position due to their ignorance, and helplessness. They are not conscious of the truth that they are as much responsible for the operation of the productive system and the production of national wealth as the capitalists and owners of means of production and if they become conscious of such truth and their strength and power, the capitalistic exploitation shall end. Accordingly Gandhi wrote : “If Capital is power, so is work . . . Either is dependent on the other. Immediately the worker, realises his strength, he is in a position to become a co-sharer of the capitalist instead of remaining his slave.”²⁴⁴

Thus the workers and the peasants should be conscious of their strength and demonstrate it to the capitalists and the wealthy. If the workers combine among themselves and demonstrate to the capitalists that production and accumulation of wealth will be impossible without their co-operation, the latter

may be forced to see reason, concede the demands of the poor, renounce a part of their profit or wealth in favour of the poor and act as trustees of their superfluous wealth on their behalf. As Gandhi advised the workers : "What you must do is to demonstrate to the capitalists the power of labour and they will consent to be the trustees of those who toil for them."²⁴⁵ As the peasants and workers are comparatively decile, ignorant, and acquiescent in their approach to the problems of inequality, Gandhi wanted education of the have-nots so that they would realise their power and strength. Accordingly he said : "At present the workers should only be taught to impose their will on the mill owners . . . I can teach labour to use its power and to claim partnership with capital."²⁴⁶

NON-VIOLENT NON-CO-OPERATION

Now the question arises what form, this demonstration of strength by the workers and peasants, the poor and the disinherited, shall assume ? Gandhi pinned his faith in non-violent struggle assuming the form of Satyagraha, but Gandhi's plan of Satyagraha proceeds with non-violent non-co-operation at its mast and he not only prescribed its adoption for winning political independence but also for erecting a just social order. As he said : "I have always held that social justice even to the last and the lowliest is impossible of attainment by force. I have further believed that it is possible by further training of the lowliest by non-violent means to secure redress of the wrong suffered by them. That means is non-violent non-co-operation."²⁴⁷

Gandhi's technique of Satyagraha of course does not proceed with an attitude of hatred against the wrong-doer; yet non-co-operation against the rich and the capitalists, the exploiters and the wealthy is as much a duty as co-operation with a system that is based on justice and egalitarianism. Martin Luther King who got himself indoctrinated by the Gandhian philosophy and technique of Satyagraha has written : "To accept passively an unjust system is to co-operate with that system; thereby the oppressed become as evil as the oppressor. Non-co-operation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is co-operation with good."²⁴⁸ Besides no body can be expected to co-operate with the system that perpetuates one's own exploita-

tion and perpetrates his slavery. As Gandhi has written : "At times non-co-operation becomes as much a duty as co-operation. No one is bound to co-operate in one's own undoing or slavery."²⁴⁹

Gandhi grasped the essence of the socialist theory of equality of all individuals in respect of the fulfilment of their basic needs. But not only he realised that in respect of fulfilment of his basic need each has equal right with the other; each has the duty to get his rights respected and "the corresponding remedy is to non-co-operate with him who deprives me of the fruit of my labour".²⁵⁰

A Satyagrahi of Gandhian prescription shall no doubt abstain from aiming at the destruction of the adversary or taking advantage of his adversity. But as it has been observed : "The Satyagrahi is no passively vegetating individual but a warrior of truth."²⁵¹ As Gandhi viewed it : "It is never the intention of a Satyagrahi to embarrass the wrong-doer . . . The Satyagrahi's object is to convert, not to coerce, the wrong-doer."²⁵² But if inspite of their best efforts the peasants and the workers fail to convince the capitalists and the privileged section of the society to renounce their wealth and act as the trustees of their superfluous wealth for the sake of the poor and the community at large, non-violent non-co-operation is the most potent weapon to initiate such changeover. Hence Gandhi observed : "If however inspite of the utmost effort, the rich do not become guardians of the poor in the true sense of the term, and the latter are more and more crushed, and die of hunger what is to be done ? In trying to find the solution to this riddle, I have lighted on non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience, as the right and infallible means."²⁵³

Non-violent non-co-operation is a technique that works in two ways. Non-co-operation to start with is a technique of self-suffering whose ultimate objective is to make the adversary see your point by inflicting suffering on oneself. As James E. Bristol has observed, the practitioners of Satyagraha or non-violent non-co-operation while taking loss or suffering upon themselves "try to bring about a change of attitude within their enemy; they strive to raise his sights".²⁵⁴ Richard B. Gregg has equally observed : "The suffering of the Satyagrahi is as it were a mirror held up to the violent party in which the violent

ones come gradually to see themselves as violating that human unity and its implications.”²⁵⁵ Gandhi, a seeker after Truth and a worshipper in the shrine of Truth believed that self-suffering stands at the core of Truth. To make your adversary see your point you must make his heart melt by inflicting suffering upon yourself. Accordingly he said, “the quest of Truth involves, *tapas*—self-suffering, sometimes even unto death.”²⁵⁶ Besides the art of non-violence in which he reposed his faith also involves self-suffering.²⁵⁷ Gandhi believed that no body however depraved he may be is beyond redemption and infliction of self-suffering shall melt the heart of the opponent however stout the heart may be. If the workers and peasants shall non-co-operate with the capitalists and landlords, they shall go out of work and without bread too and their family members and children shall also starve. The suffering of these workers and peasants, shall have its echo in the hearts of the capitalists and landlords, would shake their vein of morality, arouse their sense of moral responsibility and stir up their human conscience so that they would concede to the demands of the workers and peasants for a reasonable increase in wage. Hence Gandhi wrote : “I have found that mere appeal to reason does not answer where prejudices are agelong and based on supposed religious authority. Reasons has to be strengthened by suffering and suffering opens the eyes of understanding.”²⁵⁸ As Erik H. Erikson has observed : “Gandhi claimed that only the voluntary acceptance of self-suffering can reveal the truth latent in a conflict and in the opponent.”²⁵⁹

Gandhi who spearheaded the Ahmedabad Textile Workers’ struggle of non-violent non-co-operation against the millowners, by the suffering of the workers and his own fast unto death, made the mill-owners to realise the rationale in the demand of the workers for a pay rise. Millowners like Shankerlal Banker and Anasuyabehn who belonged to the class of the privileged not only patronised the workers during the struggle; they also shared the sufferings of the workers during the movement. The infliction of self-suffering by Gandhi on one-self by going on fast, moved the heart of many mill-owners who appealed to him to break his fast. Ambalal Sarabhai who till the last, by his firm attitude, sustained the other employers, was greatly pained by Gandhi’s fast. He came and sat by Gandhi for hours requ-

esting him to give up his fast. On the third day many other employers joined him in this request.²⁶⁰ Hence as Theodor Ebert has observed : "Gandhi reckoned that in these circumstances voluntary suffering would act like 'Shock Therapy'."²⁶¹

But if the capitalists and the landed interests are hard-hearted and stiff enough not to develop resilience as a result of the moral pressure exerted on them by the self-suffering inflicted by the workers and peasants on themselves ? If they continue to hold on to their wealth and privileges even in face of the suffering of the workers and peasants how egalitarian society can be brought about ? Gandhi suggests that if the peasants and workers realise their power, demonstrate their strength and non-co-operate with the exploitative productive system, the factories shall remain idle, the fields shall lie fallow and thus production will come to a stand-still. The prospects of profit and accumulation of wealth and prosperity of the capitalists and the property-owners shall accordingly melt in the thin air. Hence by realising their strength, by co-operating and combining among themselves but through non-co-operation with the capitalists and the landlords, the peasants and workers can make the privileged section of the society see that they are as much responsible or even more so for production than the capitalists. They can demonstrate thereby that capital by itself is powerless and can never be able to produce anything without labour and the labour has right to be paid its share of production in form of adequate wage and living standard. Accordingly Gandhi wrote : "The moment the cultivators of the soil realise their power, the Zamindari evil will be sterilised. What can the poor Zamindar do when they say that they will simply not work the land unless they are paid enough to feed and clothe and educate themselves and their children in a decent manner ? In reality the toiler is the owner of what he produces. If the toilers intelligently combine they will become an irresistible power."²⁶²

Thus Gandhi visualised that capitalists and landlords, however wealthy they may be and however great may be their command over the means of production, cannot operate the system without the co-operation of the workers or the peasants. The capitalists and landlords in order to meet the state of deadlock arising out of non-co-operation of the workers or peasants,

may think of substitutes but non-co-operation and agitation short of violence, of the non-co-operating workers may be directed against such persons who extend their hands of co-operation to the capitalists and landlords, and consequently such co-operating workers and peasants may choose to make common cause with the non-co-operating workers. Accordingly Gandhi said, "The owner can not till all the land himself and he will have to give in to their just demands. It may however be that the tenants are replaced by others. Agitation short of violence will then continue till the replacing tenants see their error and make common cause with the evicted tenants."²⁶³

Thus the technique of non-violent non-co-operation may act as an effective instrument to secure redistribution of income and wealth in the society and thus pave the way for the establishment of an egalitarian society. There is no need for accentuation of class-antagonism and fomentation of class-war. As he said : "The problem is not to set class against class, but to educate labour to a sense of its dignity . . . The moment labour recognises its own dignity, money will find its rightful place, i.e. it will be held in trust for labour. For labour is more than money."²⁶⁴

But Gandhi was also conscious that inspite of all acts of persuasion, self-suffering and non-co-operation some capitalists and privileged people may not outgrow their greed and may not renounce their possession. They may not act as Trustees and may still resist. Although he treated the state as an instrument of violence, was against an increase in the power of the state and would oppose with all his might concentration of power in the hands of the state, he was still prepared to take the help of legislation to get rid of these obstinate elements in order to even out inequality in the socio-economic structure so as to pave the way for a socialist society. Accordingly he said : "I believe in legislation. There is an element of coercion in it, but that can not be helped."²⁶⁵

CONCLUSION

To sum up although Gandhi like the Scientific Socialists reposed his faith in the emergence of an egalitarian society devoid of exploitation, inequality, and mass misery in face of luxury

and affluence that is the lot of a handful recommended a technique diametrically opposed to the technique prescribed by the Scientific Socialists like Marx and Engels, Lenin and Stalin. The authors and experimenters of Scientific Socialism while pitching their ambition in an egalitarian society, believed that any means is as good as the other for the attainment of the noble end that is socialism. They suffered from moral indifference in respect of application of means. But for Gandhi, means was as much important as the end. He treated ends and means as exchangeable terms and ruled out the prospect of attainment of a noble end like an egalitarian society by the application of ignoble means like violence. For him application of ignoble means shall distort the end in view and attainment of the end shall recede and shall become impossible of attainment in exact proportion to the impurity of the means employed for the attainment of the end. Hence whereas Marx and Engels, Lenin and Stalin, Che Guevara or Fidel Castro freely prescribed adoption of violent method for the establishment of an egalitarian society, Gandhi rejected violent method outright. By the application of non-violent technique, the technique of peaceful persuasion and conversion, Gandhi felt that the capitalists, landlords and the big business may be converted to provide the benefits of socialism. By the application of the method of Satyagraha, and rigid adherence to the technique of non-violent non-co-operation, the privileged and the rich, the capitalists and the landlords may be made to yield to the needs of a socialist structure of society and economy. Instead of prescribing fomentation of class-antagonism and class-war, instead of advocating unleashing of the spirit of hatred and championing perpetuation of an atmosphere of violence, bloodshed, conspiracy, sabotage, and above all terrorism and totalitarianism, he recommended application of the instruments of truth, love and non-violence and firmly believed that without the application of such sober and nobler methods, no real socialism can ever be conceived. As Radivoj Uvalic scholar statesman of Yugoslavia has very aptly observed : "Gandhi was opposed to all forms of exploitation of man by man and to that extent was a socialist and a revolutionary. But he did not accept the notion of the struggle between the classes in the Marxist sense of the word. He did not think that the objective would be attained through the Marxist

struggle between the classes.”²⁶⁶

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CHAPTER 5

SARVODAYA AND GANDHIAN SOCIALISM

Champions of saner social order and egalitarian society in the past set before themselves the vision and the dream of a new Heaven and a new Earth. Since the age of Plato down to the age of Vinoba Bhave in recent times, these visionaries and social strategists have set before themselves the vision of utopia that held out the promise of a better world. Marx had set before himself the utopia of Communism and Gandhi, that of Sarvodaya.

The concept of Sarvodaya preceded the concept of Socialism and Communism in the spectrum of Gandhian egalitarian social philosophy. Subsequently when the concept of socialism and communism caught his imagination they were assimilated into this ideal of Sarvodaya. Hence the concept of socialism of Gandhi is indistinguishable from his concept of Sarvodaya; rather he desired that his socialism and communism shall find their culmination and fulfilment in the ideal of Sarvodaya. Although reference to socialism and communism are profusely discernible in his pronouncements and writings, particularly from the days of the formation of the Communist Party of India and the Congress Socialist Party, and he did not mince words to assert his claim as a socialist and even a communist, yet Gandhi's primary and life-long adherence was to the philosophy of Sarvodaya. It may be more accurate to say that a socialist and a communist at heart, his concept of socialism or communism was anchored on the granite rock of Sarvodaya. His concept of Sarvodaya was considered broad and deep enough to embrace and assimilate the humanistic ideals of socialism and

communism shorn of its class character, gross materialism and violence in its naked form.

SOURCES OF SARVODAYA

(a) Influence of Ruskin

Gandhi's original use of the term Sarvodaya dates back to the year 1904. In translating into Gujarati, Ruskin's *Unto This Last*—the book that he acknowledges as exerting the most radical and revolutionary influence on his life and philosophy—he first used the term *Sarvodaya*. The title of the book when translated into Gujarati was Sarvodaya or “the welfare of all”. *Unto This Last* was one of the few books that Gandhi read but one of those few books that did cast a lasting impact on his life and thought. As he has written, “Of those books the one that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in my life was *Unto This Last*.”¹

In the context of the above fact and statement it is quite natural to believe that in respect of his concept of Sarvodaya, Gandhi derived his inspiration from Ruskin. Of course he acknowledges that “I translated it later into Gujarati, entitling it Sarvodaya (the welfare of all)”², but the idea of “welfare of all” formed a part of his mental make-up even before he read this book.

Ruskin's book according to Gandhi had three lessons for him and he summed them up as follows : “(1) That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all. (2) That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work. (3) That a life of labour i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is the life worth living.”

Of these three lessons or messages, the most significant is the first one from the stand-point of Gandhi's concept of Sarvodaya or the “welfare of all”. Second and the third were simply the corollaries that flowed from the first or the very means that were meant to serve, the objective of “welfare of all”. But Gandhi had deep in his heart the cherished objective of welfare of all or Sarvodaya even before he read Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. This is evident from what he has written in his autobiography, “The first of these I knew.”³ That Ruskin's book

exercised such powerful influence on him, captured his thought process and transformed his life's mission is accounted for by the fact, "I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life."⁴

Thus there is no disputing the fact that Gandhi had a dim realisation of the concept of Sarvodaya or the welfare of all, even before he went through the pages of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. It is even sometimes viewed with cynicism that the idea of Sarvodaya or the welfare of all is at all contained in the *Unto This Last* of Ruskin. Geoffrey Ashe has gone to the extent of saying : "The Gujrati version which Gandhi afterwards composed is entitled Sarvodaya meaning 'general good' or 'the welfare of all'. But in fact he misunderstood the book. The second maxim is not there, the third only doubtfully. He read them into the text himself out of what he described as a dim realisation in his own mind."⁵

Of course it will be too much uncharitable to Ruskin to argue that, Sarvodaya is a product of misunderstanding of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* or to say indirectly that *Unto This Last* had nothing to contribute to the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya. Ruskin the philanthropist and the Christian Socialist was vocal in denouncing the acquisitive society of his days wherein the governing principle was one of getting rich at the expense of one's neighbour. While denouncing the mercantile economics or the art and science of getting rich Ruskin advocated, "jurisprudence" replacing "prudence".⁶ Social welfare rather than individual good at the expense of the society, social good rather than profiteering and accumulation of wealth at the expense of mounting distress of the millions, formed the core of the philosophy of Ruskin as contained in *Unto This Last*. Deriving inspiration for his title and work "Unto This Last" from the "Parable of the Vineyard", Ruskin wanted that even those who join the work last, the weak and the invalid, the disabled and the incapacitated, the deaf and the mute, must get justice from the society. Thus although Ruskin did not speak of welfare of all in categorical, and clear and expressed terms, yet it will be a travesty of truth to say that the objective of "welfare of all" does not remain couched in the pages of *Unto This Last* of Ruskin. Perhaps it is more accurate

to say "Gandhi's peculiar mixture of idealism and practicality took from the book, what he most needed, what most suited his inner nature . . . "7

Gandhi had deep down in his heart the desire to see the welfare of all. *Unto This Last* stimulated this desire and instilled in him a sense of determination and dedication to work for it, to give his life for it. Sarvodaya or welfare of all became henceforward his Polestar. But while accepting the ideal of Sarvodaya or the welfare of all, as his life's mission, Gandhi went beyond the aspirations contained in *Unto This Last*. In translating *Unto This Last*, Gandhi gave the title of Sarvodaya to the Gujarati version of Ruskin's work. *Unto This Last* literally translated lays emphasis on the last, the oppressed, and the down-trodden rather than all. As Vinoba Bhave has observed, "The proper rendering of *Unto This Last* would be Antyodaya 'uplift of last' rather than Sarodaya."⁸ But Gandhi intentionally used the word Sarvodaya or the welfare of all instead of Antyodaya. Ruskin, while not less concerned than Gandhi with social welfare, perhaps could not make him free from the prevalent utilitarian philosophy of his days. Hence while aiming at a more morally and ethically oriented social order he said: "The final outcome and consummation of all wealth is in the producing as many as possible full-breathed, bright-eyed, happy hearted human creatures."⁹ He further said: "That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings."¹⁰ His objective therefore was production of "the greatest number" of integrated personalities. Gandhi went far ahead and his vision embraces not only production of the "as many as possible", "the greatest number" or the "largest number" of happy and integrated human beings, but "welfare of all" that does not exclude largest possible number of happy human hearts. Hence as Vinoba Bhave has very appropriately observed, Gandhi is the real author of the term Sarvodaya.¹¹

Gandhi in explaining the impact of *Unto This Last* on him and why it exerted such profound influence on him, has observed in his autobiography, that he discovered some of his deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin.¹² He further says that he knew prior to reading *Unto This Last* that no good of the individual is conceivable without the good of all or the

good of the individual is contained in the welfare of all or in Sarvodaya. Thus while Gandhi's concept of Sarvodaya was powerfully influenced by Ruskin's *Unto This Last* he drew his primary inspiration from some other sources and *Unto This Last* only provided confirmation and reinforcement to the idea he had already cherished.

(b) Influence of Indian Cultural Heritage

This Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya or the "welfare of all" is a part of the overall Gandhian inheritance that Gandhi derived from the cultural heritage of India. The Indian culture since the early days of recorded history clearly conceives of the welfare of all. Even Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, a masterpiece of ancient Hindu treatise on diplomacy and statecraft rather than a text on Indian ethics while prescribing the art and science of establishing the state, maintaining order, and making the government obeyed, prescribes that the ruler must be just and righteous, his supreme consideration being the welfare of the people. "In the happiness of the subjects lies his happiness, in their welfare his welfare. Whatever pleases himself he shall not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects he shall consider as good."¹³

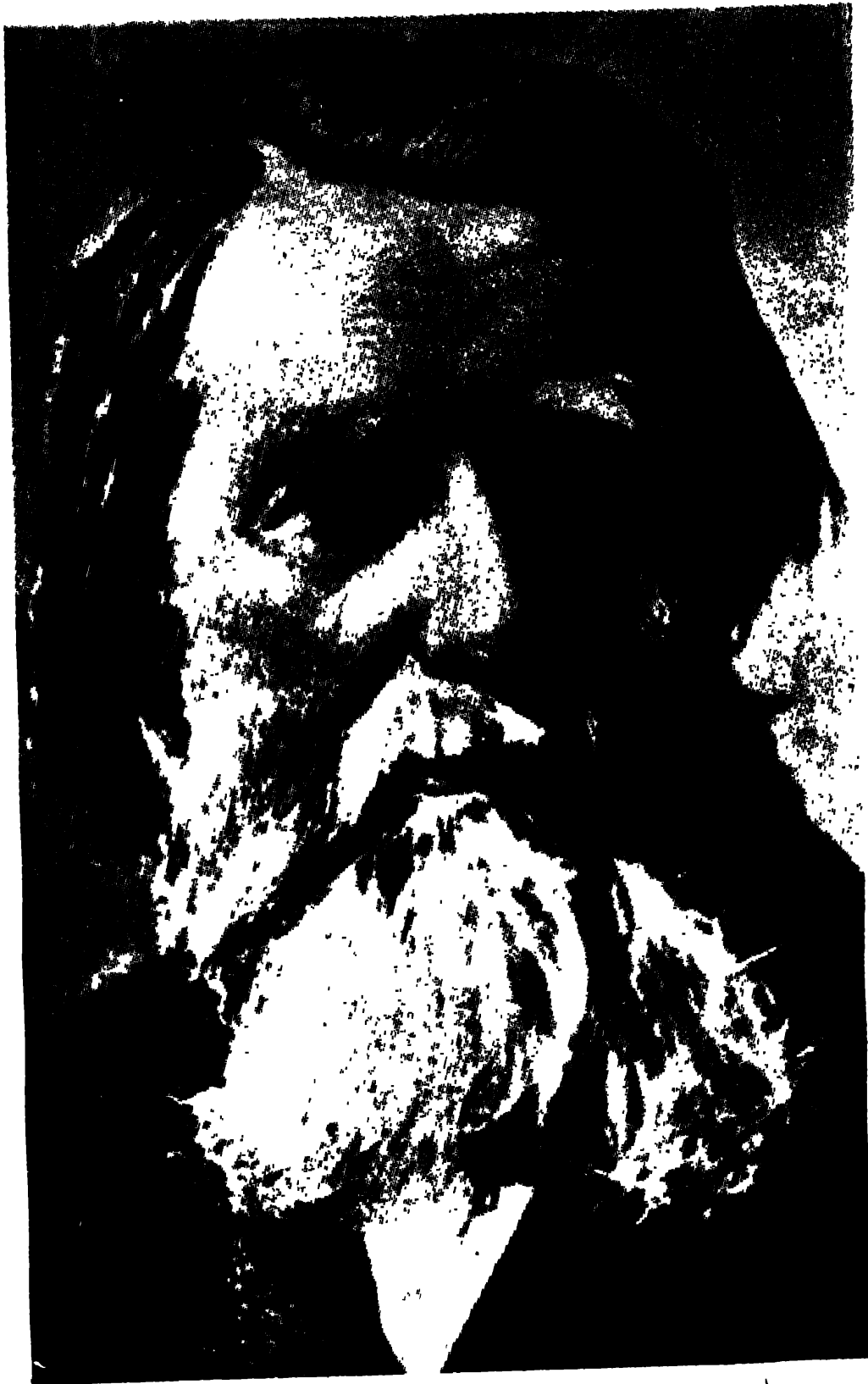
(i) *Impact of the Vedas, the Upanishad and the Gita*

From the early days of the Indian cultural heritage, from the days of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Vedantas, the saints and seers of India have conceived of an integrated concept of the Universe as a manifestation of the Eternal, All-pervasive and Indestructible Brahman. The cosmic world has been viewed by them as an emanation of the Supreme Reality or the Brahman. The particular selves have been viewed merely as fragments or sparks of the Universal Self. As the central theme of the Upanishad is "Tat Tvam Asi" or "That Thou art", everything have been conceived as manifestation of the Brahman or the Brahman has been viewed as all-pervasive. As Mrs. Annie Besant has observed : "Such is the final truth, such the goal of all wisdom, of all devotion, of all right activity. That Thou art. Nothing less than that is the wisdom of the Upanishad, nothing more than that for more than that there is not."¹⁴

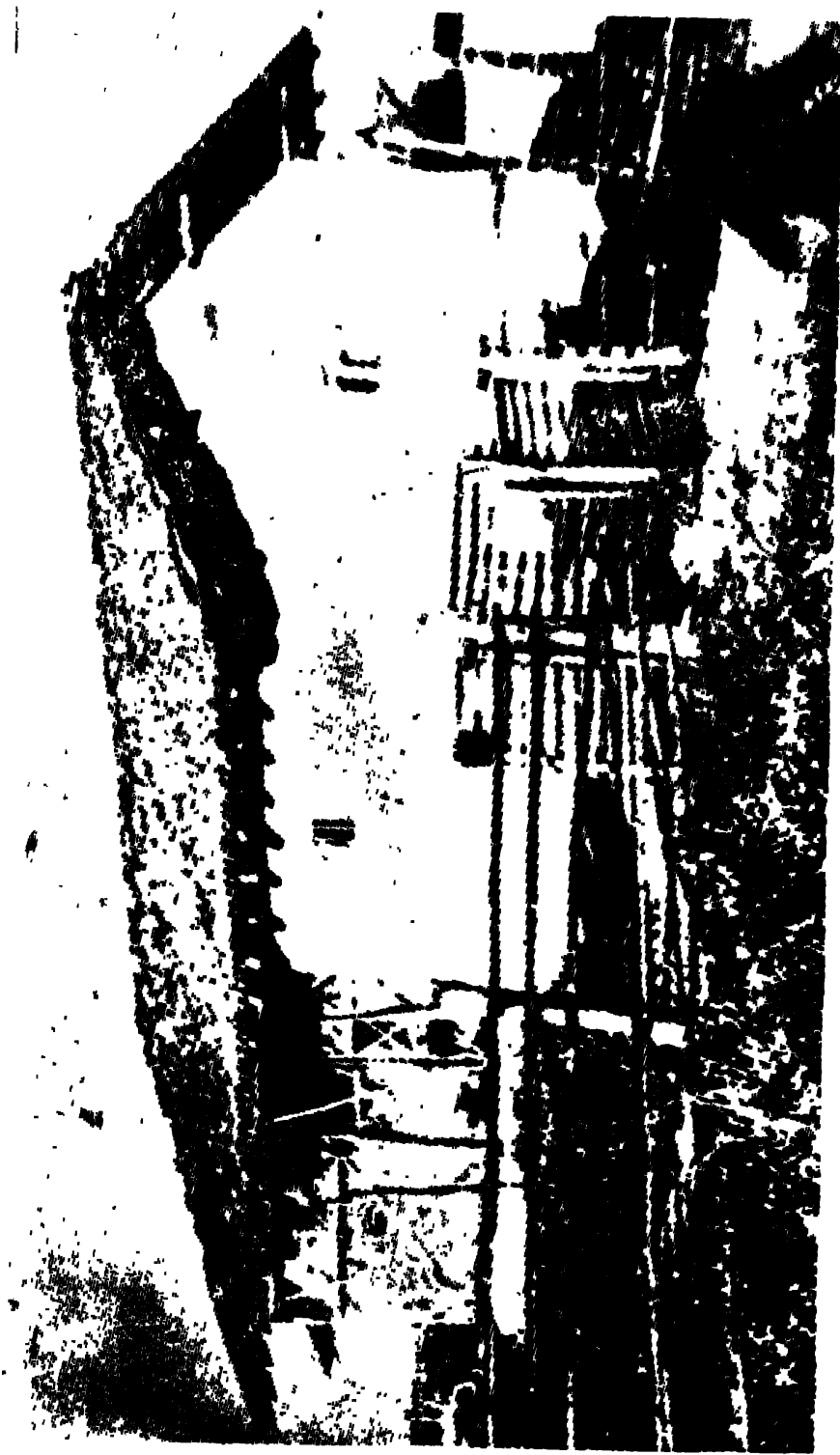
Thus the only reality is the Ultimate Reality and the only consciousness is the Universal Consciousness of which individual consciousness forms an integral part. As Mrs. Annie Besant has further observed : "All is God consciousness for there is none other. And as consciousness unfolds from the grain of sand to the plant, from the plant to the animal, from the animal to the man, from the man to the Deva it is only God unfolding His hidden powers in the sheaths of matter in which He wills to hide Himself from the eyes of flesh. There is nothing else for 'Brahman is All'. There is no consciousness, save His consciousness thrilling through furthest space, living in tiniest atom There is nothing else but Brahman. He is all and the Universe is in Him. Its manifestation is only a manifestation of himself."¹⁵ The Mundakopanishad stressing the identity of the Brahman and the Jivatma says : "As from a flaming fire in a thousand directions bodies of like nature as sparks proceed; so, O Beloved, from the Eternal are born beings who also return thither."¹⁶

The Bhagavad Gita in Canto X and XI depicts how the Supreme Reality forms the core of everything ideal, beautiful, glamorous, wondrous, majestic, mighty and lustrous and is the essence of every living being, subtle and splendid. As Sri Krishna says to Arjuna, "I am the Spirit seated deep in every creature's heart, from Me they come; by Me they live, at My word they depart."¹⁷ He further says that He forms the source, the centre, and the terminus of everything visible or comprehensible and the source of endless life and boundless love; "Living or life-less, still or stirred, whatever beings be, None of them is in all the worlds, but it exists by Me."¹⁸

Thus the entire Universe in its manifold diversity forms an integral part of the Supreme Reality or the Brahman. All are blended in Him and He envelopes them all. He is the eternal and all-pervasive string that ties together different pearls that constitute the universe. Thus the cosmic world, according to Indian culture, beginning from the tiniest atom unto the entire Universe including the Earth and the Heaven, the sun and the planets, are bound together in an indissoluble bond and form together an integrated whole as parts of the Supreme Reality—the Atman. They acquire meaning and significance as parts of the Eternal and the all-enveloping whole. "Nothing can be



**Ruskin, who profoundly influenced.
Gandhian Socialist Thought in general &
his concept of Sarvodaya in particular.**



Here he dreamt of the shape of Socialist India.
(Gandhi's Ashram at Wardha)



The Barrister turned a Proletariat.
(Gandhi with Kallenbach)



In Search of Poor Man's Food.
(The historic Dandi March—Gandhi's revolt against British Imperialism)

conceived without a reference to the whole. The beauty and the majesty, the splendour and the grandeur of anything, any sentient or insentient being, is dependent on the excellences of the whole or the Atman. They not only form an integral part of the whole or the Atman; they are woven together into the silken fabric that shall lose its lustre if reduced to separate pieces of yarn.

Thus the essence of Indian cultural heritage is unity in diversity rather than an atomistic, individualistic and egocentric philosophy that sacrifices the whole for the parts. The concept of Brahman is the concept of wholeness and a reliance on the ideal of All. Accordingly in the Chhandogyaopanishad it is said, "Aum verily this All. Aum verily this All."¹⁹ In the Taittiriyoopanishad it has been said, "Aum is Brahman. Aum is this All."²⁰ Thus the wisdom of India and the essence of Indian culture consist in the emphasis on All instead of its fragments, in the Supreme and Eternal value of All and the whole, instead of the parts thereof. As Mrs. Annie Besant has observed : "Brahman and the All are identical. Such is the testimony of the Ancient Wisdom. There is no difference. There is nothing else. Brahman and the All are one and the same thing."²¹

Such integrated view of the Universe as conceived by the ancient saints and seers of India led to an integrated view of life too. If the cosmic world forms an integral part of the Brahman, the Supreme Being and the Ultimate Reality, the human beings are no exception to it. They believed that the worth and the dignity of the individual, their brilliance and their excellences, their fulfilment and perfection consist in their complete identification with the Supreme and absolute intermingling of the self with the Absolute Self. "The goal of life is communion with the Supreme."²² But such communion with the Supreme and identification with the Ultimate Reality consists not in donning a ritualistic conduct, observing religious formalities and performing religious rites but in rendering service to the creation of God or to the entire universe. As S. Radhakrishnan has very appropriately observed : "True religious life must express itself in love and aim at the unity of mankind. Bead necklaces, rosaries, triple paint on forehead, or putting on ashes, pilgrimages, baths in holy rivers, meditation or image worship, do not purify a man, as service of fellow

creatures does.”²³

Indians conceived of universal love and universal service in terms of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* and *Svadesha bhūbana trayam*. The concept of universal brotherhood, universal love and service to the entire creation is contained in the following ideology of Hindu saints and seers :

*Mata Ca Parvatidevi Pitadeva Maheswarah,
bandhavah Sivabhakts s’ ca Svadeso
bhuvana trayam
Udara coritanam tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam
Varanasi medini.*²⁴

The *Bhagavad Gita* is also replete with references to the concept of universal welfare or the welfare of all. Salvation or identification with the Supreme is the highest ideal preached in the *Gita*. But just as fuel becomes fire when it gives itself away to fire, man can attain his identification with the Supreme and become one with the Divine by complete surrender and performance of dedicated service to God. This complete surrender or dedicated service in turn is inconceivable without promotion of the welfare of the entire creation, since God is indistinguishable from his creation. Hence only by dedicated service to the Universe and sacrifice of one’s all for the welfare of God’s creation, one can attain Godhood. Accordingly it has been observed, “The characteristic of the good and the enlightened is that they are always engaged in the welfare of all.”²⁵

Chapter III of the *Bhagavad Gita* or the *Karmayoga* while enjoining on human beings *Yajna* or performance of duty for their survival and prosperity, emphasises on selfless performance of duty having in view the welfare of all. Particularly this is evident from a careful and critical study of verses 11, 12 and 13 of this Chapter. As the verses read :

*devān bhavayatā’ nena
te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ
parasparam bhāvayantaḥ
śreyah param avāpsyatha 11*

*iṣṭān bhogān hi vo devā
dāsyante yajñabhāvitāḥ
tair dattān apradāyai’ bhyo
yo bhuñkte stenā eva saḥ 12*

*yajñasiṣṭāsinaḥ santo
mucyante sarvakilbiṣaiḥ
bhuñjate te tv agham pāpā
ye pacanty ātmakāraṇāt. . . 13*

The significance of these verses is that, one will attain supreme good and highest bliss by nourishing God through work or sacrifices, fostered by sacrifices. God will confer on one the enjoyments he aspires and the righteous people would consume only the remnants of their sacrifice. Understood in its true spirit, if the Gita preaches the message that God is omnipresent and all-pervasive having neither a beginning nor an end but living through every thing and every being, service to God necessarily involves service to the whole universe or the entire creation of God. As Gandhi has interpreted it, "God in shlokas 11 and 12 must be taken to mean the whole creation of God. The service of all created beings is the service of the Gods, and the same is sacrifice."²⁶ As he has said in another connection "Yajna means an act directed to the welfare of others . . . 'Others' embraces not only humanity but all life. This body therefore has been given to us only in order that we may serve all creation with it."²⁷ Thus these verses preach the message of service to the whole world and the entire creation.

The same emphasis on universal good or welfare of the entire world is noticeable in verse 25 of the same Chapter. As it reads :

*saktāḥ karmaṇy avidvāmsō
yathā kurvanti bhārata
kuryād vidvāṃs tathā' saktas
cikīrṣur lokasaṁgraham . . . 25*

As the verse implies, the enlightened souls shall perform their duties in a spirit of detachment, for the sake of "Universal service" or "Universal Welfare" or for the maintenance of the "World order" as the unenlightened ones perform such functions in a spirit of attachment.²⁸ As Edwin Arnold has interpreted it :

"So let the enlightened toil sense freed but set

To bring the world deliverance and its bliss."²⁹

In Chapter V, verse 25 and in Chapter XII, verse 4 the welfare of all has been more clearly and categorically emphasised. As the verses read :

*Labhante brahmanirvānam
ṛṣayaḥ kṣīṇakalmaṣāḥ*

Chinnadvaidhā yatatmānah
Sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ Ch. V, Vr. 25

Samniyamye 'ndriyagrāmam
sarvatra samabuddhayaḥ
te prāpnuvanti mām eva
sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ Ch. XII, Vr. 4

In both the verses the emphasis is not only on the welfare of all human beings of this world or this universe of ours but also of all creatures of all the universes conceivable.

In Chapter XI, verse 55 and Chapter XII, verse 13 there is indirect reference to the welfare of all. As the verses read :

matkarmakṛṇ matparamo
madbhaktaḥ saṅgavarjitaḥ
nirvairaḥ sarvabhūteṣu
yaḥ sa mām etī pāṇḍava .. Ch. XI, Vr. 55

adveṣṭā sarvabhūtanām
maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca
nirmamo nirahamkāraḥ
samaduḥṣasukhaḥ kṣamī .. Ch. XII, Vr. 13

Thus the verses indicate that for the attainment of God or the Brahman one must renounce hatred or ill-will against all creatures or in other words shall be inspired by a spirit of goodwill for all or an aspiration for the welfare of all creatures.

Hence Gita in conformity with the Indian tradition and heritage, conceives of the welfare of all or the entire universe.

(ii) *Impact of Buddhism, Jainism and Vaishnavism*

Apart from the Hindu scriptures like the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita, Buddhism and Jainism that emanated as attempts to reform Hinduism and served as adjuncts to Hinduism also lay equal emphasis on the welfare of all. Although Lord Buddha renounced the world, its pleasures and sufferings, for the sake of his own Nirvana or pleasure of permanent nature, after the attainment of enlightenment he was equally concerned with the salvation of all and indicating the ways for the attainment of the same. "He was interested in their welfare."³⁰

The following Buddhist hymn from the Sutta Nipata preaches in clear and categorical terms the concept of the wel-

fare of all :

“May creatures all abound
in weal and peace; may all
be blessed with peace always;
all creatures weak or strong,
all creatures great and small;
creatures unseen or seen,
dwelling after or near,
born or awaiting birth,
—may all be blessed with peace.”³¹

The Hinayana sect of Buddhism holds that the enlightenment that was attained by Lord Buddha can be attained by all men provided the path indicated by Lord Buddha is followed. All have such potentiality to attain bodhi, according to this view. The Mahayanas adopt the ideal of Bodhisattva who after obtaining release from the bondage of the world remains within it to love men, to serve them, to bestow on them hopes of salvation and guide them to attain this objective. Hence S. Radhakrishnan has very appropriately observed : “In the Mahayana, not only one’s personal salvation but that of all creatures is stressed. Through their infinite love for struggling humanity, the Bodhisattvas elect to postpone the final bliss or nirvana to which they are entitled so that they may continue the unending labour of saving the souls of all since all are destined for Buddhahood.”³²

Above all Buddhism pitches its ambition high in comprehending extension of goodwill to all living creatures, and making their lives comfortable and worth living by all possible means, by all possible sacrifices, and by attempting to “hold off evil from the sky above and earth beneath and all the winds which blow”. As Edwin Arnold understood it, Lord Buddha urged upon his disciples :

“... offer loving thoughts and acts to all,
To parents, as the East where rises light;
To teachers as the South where rich gifts come,
To wife and children as the West where gleam,
Colours of love and calm, and all days end;
To friends and Kinsmen, and all men as North;
To humblest living things beneath, to Saints
And Angels and the blessed Dead above;

So shall all evil be shut off, and so
The six main quarters will be safety kept.”³³

Thus universal love and universal welfare form the corner-stones of the Buddhist philosophy.

The Jainas equally accept as their ideal the welfare of all. Of their five vows, non-violence, or Ahimsa was the most important. But the positive aspect of non-violence is the love for fellow-beings, not only human, but also all creatures. Mahavira not only renounced all worldly enjoyments and freed himself from all entanglements for one's own salvation; he preached that man must not inflict pain on others, even on insects, because the objective here is promotion of the happiness of the entire universe and all living beings, animals, and insects not excluded. In one of his prayers a Sadhaka says: “Let the King be victorious and righteous, Let there be rain in every proper season, Let disease die and famine and theft be no more. Let the law of Jaina give all happiness to all the living beings of the world.”³⁴

According to Jainism, a Tirthankar is one who provides the ship to cross the world of Samsara. Having attained ananta Jnana or infinite knowledge, ananta darshana or infinite perception, ananta virya or infinite power and ananta sukha or infinite bliss, by destroying karma, he devotes his whole life for endowing happiness on the rest of the world. As S. Radhakrishnan has observed: “Endowed with these qualities he becomes an omniscient being who spends the rest of his life in the world for the good of mankind.”³⁵

The concept of welfare of all was so much an integral part of Jaina philosophy that the term “Sarvodaya” was used by one Jaina teacher Samantabhadra even before the Christian era. In praising the spiritual leader of the Jainas he wrote “*Sarvopadam, Antakaram, nirantam, Sarvodayam, Tirthamidam, Tavaiva*”,³⁶ or in other words “your's are the sacred waters, of the well-being of all that ends the miseries for all times”.

No doubt Gandhi came to know the Indian culture more intimately through the West. He read Edwin Arnold's, *The Song Celestial* and the *Light of Asia* towards the end of the second year of his stay in England³⁷ and Max Muller's *India—What Can It Teach Us* and Upanishads while in Durban.³⁸ Besides, his interest in them was stimulated by the theosophist brothers in

the first case and by the head of the South African General Mission Mr. Spencer West while in Durban; yet the messages of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Upanishads* and the *Light of Asia* and particularly the concepts of universal love and welfare of all contained therein, must have gone very deep into his mind and heart and inspired his thought-process and life's philosophy, even before he read Ruskin's *Unto This Last*.

Gandhi's upbringing in a Vaisnab family, a family that profoundly grasped the significance of love for all, the well-being of all, and sacrifice for the well-being of others, must have driven into his heart the concept of welfare of all since his early childhood. The Jaina contact of his family cultivated by his father, and the influence of Raichandbhai, must have brought him closer to the centre of the Jaina philosophy of welfare of all. A Gujrati verse that went very deep into his heart, almost gripped him—his mental and spiritual make up – and became his 'guiding principle' runs thus :

“For a bowl of water give a goodly meal;
For a kindly greeting bow thou down with zeal;
For a simple penny pay thou back with gold;
If thy life be rescued, life do not withhold;
Thus the words and actions of the wise regard;
Every little service tenfold they reward.
But the truly noble know all men as one,
And return with gladness good for evil done.”³⁰

This appears to have influenced Gandhi to think in terms of service to humanity or the welfare of all. With the influences of the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, Buddhism, Jainism and Vaishnavism and particularly their messages of compassion, universal love, and welfare of all, paramount in his heart, when he came across Ruskin's 'Unto This Last' in 1904 it provided confirmation to his conviction that the welfare of the individual is contained in the welfare of all or that Sarvodaya is the only rational and scientific social philosophy.

(c) Other Religious Influences

Apart from the Indian cultural heritage as represented by the *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad Gita*, Buddhism, Jainism and Vaishnavism, that profoundly influenced Gandhian thought in the direction of Sarvodaya, were the religious influences of Islam,

Christianity and Zoroastrianism that not only cast their spell on Gandhi's life and philosophy but also exerted profound influence on the fashioning of the Gandhian doctrine of Sarvodaya. Gandhi acknowledges that while in Durban, apart from the *Upanishads*, and Max Muller's *India—What Can It Teach Us* he also read the *Life of Mahomet and His Successors* by Washington Irving, Carlyle's *Panegyric on the Prophet* and *The Sayings of Zarathustra*. His contact with Christian friends and Tolstoy's *Gospel in Brief* also brought him closer to the teachings of Christianity. These religious scriptures, apart from Indian cultural heritage, had their contributions to make to the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya.

(i) *Influence of Zoroastrianism*

At the core of Zoroastrianism stand the concept of Ahura Mazdao, the equivalent of Hindu concept of Brahman. The Ahura Mazdao is the Supreme, the Universal, the All-pervasive, Source and Fountain of Life. He is the source from which all lives spring. Like the Hindu idea of spirit pervading everything and every being, the Zoroastrians conceive of the entire cosmos, the animate and the inanimate world as representing the sparks of the Ahura Mazdao. As Prophet Zoroaster observed : "He (Ahura-Mazda) first created, through His inborn lustre, the multitude of celestial bodies, and through His intellect the good creatures, governed by the inborn good mind. Thou, Ahura-Mazda, the Spirit who art everlasting, makest them (the good creatures) grow. When my eyes behold Thee, the Essence of the Truth, the Creator of life, who manifests His life in His works, then I know Thee to be the primeval Spirit, Thou Mazda so high in mind as to create the world, and the father of the good mind."⁴⁰

Thus the Ahura Mazdao is the creator and sustainer, protector and defender of every thing in this world and resides in every thing sentient and insentient and provides them their life force. The entire cosmos proceeds from Him and resides in Him. As it has been observed, "In it (Zoroastrianism) as in Hinduism, the Gods are every where . . ."⁴¹ Thus the Zoroastrians conceive of an integrated view of the cosmos a type of unity forged and sustained by the existence of the Ahura Mazdao.

Besides, the Zoroastrians subscribe to a view of spiritual

solidarity that transcends the division of human race on religious, racial and political considerations. They believe in a type of universal brotherhood and fraternity of human race. As the Zend Avesta says : "The souls of the faithful of both sexes in the Aryan countries, the Turanian countries, the Sannatian countries, the Syrian countries, the Dacian countries, in all countries—all these do we venerate."⁴² As S. Radhakrishnan has observed, "The doctrine is a universalist one . . . Here we have an explicit definition of a Universal religious community which supersedes all distinctions of race, caste, and nationality."⁴³ Thus in Zoroastrianism we find the germs of universal brotherhood and universal welfare.

(ii) *Influence of Islam*

Islam, not only conceives of Allah or God as omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, having no beginning and no end; it also concedes that "all is from God".⁴⁴ It believes that nothing except God has existence and the entire universe is but a mirror of Him. Speaking about the Sufists who represent the mystic side of Islam, Annie Besant has observed : "They teach that there is one perfect beauty and that all that is beautiful is only a ray from Him. They teach there is only one love the love of God, and all other loves are only loves as they form part of that. They teach that He alone is true Being and that all else is non-being and that man who is Himself can by illumination rise from non-being to Being and return whence he came."⁴⁵

From this unity and all-pervasiveness of God as conceived by Islam follows the Islamic concept of universal brotherhood. Like Zoroastrianism, Islam as a religious faith does not ascribe superiority to any religious faith and denigrates the other. Accordingly the Quoran says : "Say, we believe in God, and that which hath been sent down, Unto us and that which was sent down, Unto Abraham and Ismael and Issac, and Jacob and the tribes and that which was delivered to Moses and Jesus, and the Prophets from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them."⁴⁶ The Quoran even goes further and urges that those who acknowledge some prophets of God and neglect others are not true believers and such unbelievers deserve ignominious punishment. "But they who believe in God and His apostle and make no distinction bet-

ween any of them, unto those will we surely give their reward, and God is gracious and merciful.”⁴⁷

Islam not only preaches equal importance of all Prophets and equal significance of all religions; brotherhood of man and service to all is inherent in Islam. The Quoran while enjoining on the believers, good conduct and righteousness, warns the faithful : “It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces in prayer towards the East and the West, but righteousness is of him who believeth in God and the last day . . . who giveth money for God’s sake unto his kindred and unto orphans and the needy and the stranger and those who ask and for redemption of captives . . . ”⁴⁸ Thus the Quoran prescribes for the believers compassion for suffering fellow beings, and removal of their distress. That constitutes according to Quoran the standard of righteous conduct. “Verily God commandeth justice, and the doing of good, and the giving of unto kindred of what shall be necessary; and he forbiddeth wickedness, and iniquity and oppression.”⁴⁹

Thus performance of duty towards the suffering, removal of the grief of the distressed, and promoting the welfare of all, constitute the high road to salvation or attainment of God and perfection. As the Quoran maintains : “A man’s true wealth hereafter is the good he does in this world, to his fellowmen. When he dies people will ask what property has he left behind him ? But the Angels who examine him in the grave will ask what good deeds hast thou sent before thee ?”⁵⁰

Thus the ideal of welfare of all or universal welfare is contained in the philosophy of Islam. As S. Radhakrishnan has observed : “Muhammed affirms the unity of God and the brotherhood of man.”⁵¹

(iii) *Influence of Christianity*

Although Gandhi remained throughout his life a devout Hindu—of course not in the conventional and orthodox sense of the term—he was also profoundly influenced by the life and the message of Jesus Christ. Alongwith the Bhagavad Gita that became his constant companion during his life time, the message of Jesus Christ and particularly the *Sermon on the Mount* understood through the *Gospel in Brief* of Tolstoy provided him nourishment throughout his life.

The essence of the Gospel is the attainment of the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven. But this Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven should not be searched out and discovered in a life after death. As Tolstoy viewed it : "No one has ever gone up to heaven, and we have only man on earth who has come from heaven, and is himself of heaven."⁵² The Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven is not an other-worldly concept. It is a concept and an ideal relating to this world and this life. This Kingdom is possible here on this earth. It envelops the entire world and the whole creation. Man lives within it and it exists among men. As Jesus said to the Pharisees : "You can not tell by observation when the Kingdom of God comes. There will be no saying 'Look here it is !' or 'there it is', for in fact the Kingdom of God is among you."⁵³ As Tolstoy understood it "The Kingdom of God is not in any definite time or place. It is like lightening here, there and everywhere. And it has neither time nor place for the Kingdom of God that I preach is within you."⁵⁴

But this Kingdom of God that is within everybody, is at hand and within one's grasp, is often missed, because of defective vision, and lack of requisite ability to grasp it. "The Kingdom of God is on earth and that he who makes an effort can enter into it."⁵⁵ Further "The house of God is not the Temple of Jerusalem but the whole world of God's people".⁵⁶ But how can this Kingdom of God be attained on this earth ? It is by love and universal love and absence of animosity and hatred against God's creation. "Know that God requires neither sacrifice nor prayer, but only peace, concord and love among men; and that you can neither pray nor think of God if there is a single man whom you do not feel love."⁵⁷

What about the nature of the Kingdom of God ? This Kingdom is inspired not only by the ideal of universal love and a sense of fraternity and amity, but also the objective of universal well-being or welfare of all or universal deliverance. As John the Prophet gave the clarion call to his fellow-beings, "A voice calls to you; open a way for God, through the wilderness, level a path for him. Make it so that all may be level, that there may be neither hollows nor hills, neither high nor low. Then God will be among you and all will find salvation."⁵⁸

Thus the Kingdom of God on this earth is the picture of a state of human society where exaltation and elevation of all without exception is ensured and all are assured a heavenly life and divine existence. As Jesus's message to John went on it is a state of society, "Where the blind recover their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are clean, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the poor are hearing the good news."⁵⁹ As Tolstoy has interpreted it: "When the Kingdom of God comes, all men will be blessed. Tell him that my Kingdom of God is such that the poor are blessed and so is every one who understands the teaching."⁶⁰

Thus the message of Jesus and the Kingdom of God advocated by him comprehend universal good or the welfare of all. This all-embracing ideal that some times remains concealed and muffled amidst mystical and metaphorical expressions of the New Testament, has been revealed in more expressed and categorical terms in the pages of Tolstoy's *"The Gospel in Brief"*. As Tolstoy believed: "Man must serve the spirit of life and goodness in all men, and not in himself alone. Either you believe life and happiness to be good for the whole world, and should then love life and happiness for all men or you believe life and happiness to be evil and should then not love them even for yourself."⁶¹ Thus Tolstoy particularly laid special emphasis on the removal of poverty and the consequent happiness of all or the "Welfare to all men" or "welfare of all men".⁶²

To sum up Gandhi during the formative period of his life, before he read Ruskin's *Unto This Last*—came under the spell of all the important religions of the world i.e. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Zoroastrianism and Christianity. What is common to all these great religions is their concern for the entire universe, or removal of the misery of the whole world irrespective of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. As Tolstoy has said: "To the father of all men there are no separate nations or separate Kingdom: all are brothers, all sons of one Father. Make no distinction among people, as to nations and Kingdoms... Make no distinction of nationality but love foreigners as your own people."⁶³

Hence all the great religions inspite of their diversities have a common core, "a common humanity reacts in more or less

similar ways to man's encounter with the Divine".⁶⁴ As Mrs. Annie Besant felt : "Muhammad, Christ, Zorathushtra, Moses, the Rishis and the Bodhisthvas stand in one mighty Lodge, Guardians of humanity and nations."⁶⁵

Gandhi who came under the cumulative spell of all these religions and their common humanity, wrote in the *Modern Review* "Each one of them in my judgement embodies a common motivating force, the desire to uplift man's life and give it purpose."⁶⁶

Thus the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya or the uplift or welfare of all was stimulated by the combined effect of 'common humanity' as preached by all religions. Before Gandhi read Ruskin's *Unto This Last* his mental make-up must have been prepared to accept Sarvodaya or the welfare of all as the ultimate ideal—the social, economic and political structure for which one should live and strive. That is why as he said, "I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin."⁶⁷ Ruskin's *Unto This Last* and its message "That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all", simply provided further confirmation to his conviction about the welfare of all or Sarvodaya. Further, Ruskin's book became the proximate cause to infuse a sense of militancy to his conviction already adhered to, and prompted Him to translate this idea into action. As he said, "I arose with the dawn ready to reduce these principles to practice."⁶⁸

As regards the use of the word *Sarvodaya* although such word found place in Jaina scripture and was used by the Jaina Saint Samantabhadra for the first time, hundreds of years before Gandhi, yet the word *Sarvodaya* when used by Gandhi was completely his own.⁶⁹ Gandhi was not aware of the use of this word by Samantabhadra when he first used it although by this time he had already grasped the fundamentals of Jainism.⁷⁰ Inspired by the vision of universal welfare stimulated by the study of all the great religions of the world and particularly when he was waging the battle of the weak and the under-privileged who were groaning under the heels of the policy of apartheid, perpetrated by the white race in South Africa, his inner voice, as it did at many critical stages of life, dictated the way out of the impasse and the term *Sarvodaya* came to him as if in a flash. Although he gave the title of *Sarvodaya* to the

paraphrase he made of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, *Sarvodaya* is not the literal translation of *Unto This Last*. As Gandhi has himself clarified the position, "The title has not been translated but paraphrased as *Sarvodaya* (the welfare of all) as that was what Ruskin aimed at in writing this book."⁷¹ Thus the word *Sarvodaya* when he used it was purely his own coinage. Of course the term acquired greater currency after Gandhi's death when the *Sarvodaya Sangh* was formed by his more non-political fellow-workers who met at Wardha, in March 1948; yet the term *Sarvodaya* representing his social philosophy and economic and political strategy was his own coinage with a connotation and significance that has a peculiar Gandhian stamp.

SARVODAYA, ITS MEANING AND NATURE

Sarvodaya as the egalitarian utopia of Gandhi far transcends the ordinary socialist or communist ideal. It is a universalistic doctrine that comprehends the entire universe as coming within its scope.

When Gandhi used the term *Sarvodaya* for the first time, although he was not conscious of the sense in which the Jain saint Samantabhadra had used it, he was clear in his mind about the meaning of the term. Hence as he has written in his autobiography in connection with his translation of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*; "I translated it later into Gujarati, entitling it *Sarvodaya* (the welfare of all)."⁷² Thus "welfare of all" forms the core of the Gandhian concept of *Sarvodaya*. Literally speaking *Sarvodaya* is derived from two Sanskrit words *Sarva* meaning all and *Udaya* meaning awakening or development. Thus *Sarvodaya* as such means literally the awakening, upliftment or emancipation of all, or Universal Dawn.⁷³ As Vinoba Bhave has interpreted it: "By the term *Sarvodaya* is meant arising of all but not the arising of some and decline of other . . . The concept of welfare of all creatures is contained in the term."⁷⁴

Of course as already indicated earlier, Gandhi, influenced by the universalism of all the great religions of the world, conceived of the world in a more integrated and all-embracing sense; but his study of *Unto This Last* appealed to his heart and kindled his conscience so as to take cognisance of the problem of acqui-

tiveness that afflicted different sections of the society, who wanted to fatten their own purse at the expense of their neighbours. The art of getting rich by impoverishing the rest of the society may be good business strategy but as a measure to enrich the society as a whole, it has dubious significance. As Ruskin looked at it : "The art of becoming 'rich' in the common sense is not absolutely nor finally the art of accumulating much money for ourselves but also of contriving that our neighbours shall have less. In accurate terms, it is 'the art of establishing the maximum inequality in our own favour'." ⁷⁵ This was viewed by Gandhi as injurious to the health of the body politic and antagonistic to the interest of the community. He agreed with Ruskin that "as diseased local determination of the blood involves depression of the general health of the system, all morbid local action of riches will be found ultimately to involve a weakening of the resources of the body politic". ⁷⁶

(a) Welfare of All

Gandhi accepting a comprehensive view of the universe, considering the entire cosmos, all the sentient and the insentient beings as fragments of the Supreme Brahman, or the All-pervading Spirit, and like a true yogi as comprehended by the Gita, observing God or Spirit everywhere and everything resting on God or the Spirit, could not accept the atomistic view of life—a philosophy of each for himself and the devil takes the hindmost. On the other hand he accepted the philosophy of the welfare of all or universal welfare treating one, as significant as the other, as far as opportunities provided by the society are concerned.

The laissez-faire philosophy of Adam Smith and Ricardo accepted no doubt the philosophy of the good of all but their emphasis was misdirected. They believed that maximum social welfare shall be generated by a system of free and perfect competition between owners of economic enterprises, between labourers and between owners on the one hand and labourers on the other. Such a competition they contended would make the commodities cheaper and promote the welfare of the consumers who can procure the commodities so produced cheaper from a competitive market. Besides it would ensure fair wage of labourers and reasonable profit of the entrepreneurs. The

inadequacy of such a philosophy and the economy that it created was made amply evident by the mounting misery of millions of consumers and labourers who became victims of the system of "buying from the cheapest market and selling in the dearest market". The philosophy of laissez-faire with all the good intentions of its protagonists turned out to be a philosophy of exploitation wielded by a few to exploit the many. As a counter-weight to the system emerged the democratic and utilitarian revolution of the 19th century, that upheld the ideal of majority rule in the political domain, to subserve the interest of the majority in the social and the economic spheres. But this democratic and utilitarian revolution of the 19th century is much more sectarian than its predecessor since whereas the laissez-faire theory inspite of the exploitation and mass misery that it generated, was at least universalistic in its inspiration, i.e. concerned with the welfare of all, the utilitarian philosophy leaned on the side of the majority, completely neglecting the minority. Hence Gandhi realised the equal irrelevance of the theory of laissez-faire and the utilitarian philosophy and advocated the philosophy of Sarvodaya.

Gandhi writes in his Introduction to his Paraphrase of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* : "People in the West generally hold that the whole duty of man is to promote the happiness of the majority of mankind . . . Again as the object sought to be attained is the happiness of the majority, westerners do not think there is any harm if this is secured by sacrificing a minority. The consequences of this line of thinking are writ large on the face of Europe."⁷⁷ As a principle that departs from the western standard and particularly the utilitarian philosophy of the greatest good of the greatest number, Gandhi accepted as his ultimate objective the greatest good of all. As a protagonist of universal love and positive non-violence, Gandhi could not but subscribe to the ideology of universal good or welfare of all. As he writes in *Young India*, "A votary of Ahimsa cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula (of the greatest good of the greatest number) "⁷⁸ Thus the objective Gandhi had in view is not the good of a section of the community, not even of the majority or the greatest number of people who constitute the community, but the good of each and all. Accordingly Vinoba Bhave explaining the objective of Sarvodaya

says : "We do not want the rise of the few, not even of the many, or for that matter the rise of the greatest number. We can be satisfied only with the good of one and all, of the high and the low, of the strong and the weak, the intelligent as well as the dull, only then will we be satisfied. This word Sarvodaya expresses this lofty and all embracing sentiment."⁷⁹

Sarvodaya as a Gandhian utopia is therefore a social philosophy that keeps before it the ideal of good and awakening, welfare and upliftment of all, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, the able-bodied and the disabled, the intelligent and the dullard and above all the lame, the dumb, the blind, and the mute and the most able, energetic and effective individuals. As Dada Dharmadhikari has interpreted the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya : "It connotes simultaneous blossoming of the life of all individuals. Life itself signifies growth awakening and upliftment. Hence simultaneous growth of all is the very essence of Sarvodaya :"⁸⁰ As Dada Dharmadhikari has further observed : "Sarvodaya is a term with a wider connotation. Emancipation of all is the objective. It has wider connotation since it conceives of assimilation of all and not only of many or most."⁸¹

Such interpretation may pose Sarvodaya as an unrealistic ideology suffering from internal contradictions, that by trying to reconcile the conflicting and divergent elements is foredoomed to failure. Society consists of elements whose interests are diametrically opposed to one another. The welfare of the capitalists and the industrialists, the traders and the merchants, consists of more of profits or income which can be gained only by way of exploitation of the workers and charging higher price to the consumers, which naturally means more of suffering for the latter categories of members of the Society. In the same fashion the black-marketeers and profiteers can flourish only at the expense of other sections of the society. Hence the welfare of the workers and the peasants, the consumers and the middle-class men involves lower rate of profit for the industrialists or the commercialists, black-marketeers and profiteers. As Ruskin felt, "Men nearly always speak and write as if riches were absolute and it were possible by following certain scientific precepts for every body to be rich. Whereas riches are a power like that of electricity, acting only through inequalities, or

negation of itself.”⁸² Thus the question may arise how to reconcile these conflicting interests ? How the welfare of all, i.e. of the exploiters and the exploited can be promoted at the same time ? If such contradictions are irreconcilable, the *Sarvodaya* ideology that speaks of the welfare of all, is an unrealistic concept and falls flat on the ground. Jayaprakash Narayan posed the problem: “What is the good of all ? There are thieves, black-marketeers, exploiters in society. One might ask as to how you can talk of good of these people ! Do you want to give freedom to all these ?”⁸³

Welfare according to Gandhi does not consist simply of material self aggrandisement at the expense of one's neighbour or the society. It does not lie in cutting each other's throat for the sake of material gain or profiteering at the expense of the community. As Gandhi felt, “This exclusive search for physical and economic well-being prosecuted in disregard of morality is contrary to divine law.”⁸⁴ The rich with their passion to get richer and the capitalists with their greed to accumulate more capital assets, often adopt methods ethically indefensible and morally unsound. In their mad drive with breakneck speed towards material prosperity, they fall into the abyss of moral and ethical ruin. While rising to the precipice of unparalleled affluence they fall victims to a state of moral vacuum. As Jayaprakash Narayan has posed the problem : “How then does wealth accumulate with an individual ? That is just like water, which does not accumulate on plain surface, but gets stored wherever it finds a ditch or sunken space. Likewise, there are hallow places in the present social structure, where wealth accumulates.”⁸⁵

Thus material prosperity varies in inverse proportion to moral and ethical decline, or wealth accumulates at places that suffer from ethical and moral vacuum. Mere accumulation of riches does not promote the real good of the rich. The worldly rich are very often spiritually poor. They gain the Kingdom of Mammon but suffer a precipitous fall from the Kingdom of Heaven. Although apparently happy they are far from happiness. They need upliftment from their moral and ethical debris to which they have been driven in their search for material gain. Whereas the welfare of the poor consists in their material prosperity or atleast a release from their state of economic

servitude, wants, misery and starvation, for the rich their welfare consists in making them, ethically and morally richer. As Vinoba Bhave has understood it : "In this unfortunate world of ours, we are all fallen, and everyone needs to rise. The rich are fallen long since and the poor have not risen at all. The result is that both need to be uplifted."⁸⁶

Under the impact of the Bhagavad Gita, Gandhi had the realisation that supreme or eternal happiness devolves on those who "seeing Atman in all beings and all beings in Atman" identify their self interest with the welfare of the rest of the universe, share the pains and sufferings of others as their own and share their own good fortune with the rest of the society or "are engrossed in the welfare of all beings".⁸⁷ People who remain engrossed in materialism, try to fatten themselves at the expense of the community, and gain material prosperity by adopting the technique of exploitation against the rest of the community, can hardly expect to qualify themselves for such supreme happiness. If they remain submerged in their self-interest, that spells the ruin of their real, unsullied and supreme self. The more they indulge in self-aggrandisement by precipitating the misery and sufferings of the rest of the community, the farther they go from the attainment of eternal bliss or supreme happiness. Although the individuals as fragments of the Almighty Atman, are capable of realising and visualising the supreme bliss and ultimate goal, under the spell of gross self-interest and greed, they suffer from a myopic vision and become disabled to enjoy the supreme happiness that they are capable of enjoying. Such individuals although materially rich lead a really depraved life and need upliftment.

As Jayaprakash Narayan has observed : "When dust spreads over a glass mirror, it loses its brightness and assumes a dusty look. But when the dust is removed, its brightness is restored again. Similarly man is over-laid with the dust of passion and habits and ways of life. That dust has got to be removed by constant endeavour."⁸⁸ Thus the dust of passion, greed, selfishness and acquisitiveness dims the glow of individual personality and muffles the divinity in man, so that human beings who are sparks of the Divine and Ultimate Reality, and under normal circumstances are capable of being inspired by a sense of fraternity, get entangled in the trap of self-aggrandisement at the

expense of one's own neighbour. Such individuals although materially rich are in urgent need of redemption from the moral, spiritual, and ethical slum so that their real divinity is once again released and their internal glow and brilliance shines forth once again. As Jayaprakash Narayan has suggested "so their good consists in weaning them away from that path".⁸⁹ What is true of the rich is also true of the black-marketeers, the thieves and the burglars who live a life of parasitism. They are to be elevated from a state of moral and spiritual ruin.

Hence the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya comprehends the welfare of all, rich and poor alike. The richer sections of the society, the bourgeoisie and the black-marketeers, who live their lives in moral slums need their uplift, awakening and redemption as much as the poor who groan under the heels of poverty, want, deprivation and destitution. It also comprehends the emancipation of the thieves, the burglars, the black-marketeers, the highway-men, and the cut-throats.

Thus Sarvodaya as a scheme of social engineering holds as its ideal the upliftment of all, that embraces spiritual regeneration of the rich and morally depraved and the material redemption of the poor. As Jayaprakash Narayan has observed : "Sarvodaya implies the greatest good of all as against the greatest good of the greatest number. It stands for a society which would strive for the good of all and which everybody would be happy. In such a society there would be no distinction of high and low."⁹⁰

Thus the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya is a concept of welfare of all, of the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak and of the haves and the have-nots. Since all are fallen in one way or the other, materially or spiritually, intellectually or physically, all require redemption and all are to be uplifted.

(b) Universal Welfare

Gandhi was an impassioned nationalist who remained in the forefront of the national struggle for about three decades. As he spearheaded the Indian struggle for liberation, it is but natural to accept that he had deep down in his heart a passion for the uplift of the Indians, particularly their material and moral enrichment and their release from century-old slavery and exploitation. But as an advocate of Sarvodaya or the welfare

of all, he did never harbour any ill-will against the imperialist rulers. Nor his patriotism and nationalism made him sectarian so as to comprehend Indian welfare at the expense of the rest of the world. Rather his championship of the cause of the oppressed and exploited Indians was indirectly an attempt to redeem the British imperialists of their sins of exploiting and oppressing the innocent people of India. By liberating India, Gandhi felt, he would provide the British imperialists an opportunity to lead a cleaner, better, purer and a more dignified life. While sustaining material loss—loss of empire, market for British industry and opportunity for the employment of the British youth, they shall gain in moral stature.

Gandhi who was deeply steeped in Indian cultural heritage could not escape from its all-embracing concept of welfare of the entire universe. The Vedas accepted as their ideal not only the welfare of all human beings the world over, but also of all creatures, bipeds as well as quadrupeds. As it says : "*Samno astu dvipade sam Catuspade.*"⁹¹ Further the Indian cultural heritage pins its faith on :

*"Sarvepi Sukhinah Santu, sarve Santu Niramayah,
Sarve Bhadrani pasyantu ma kaschit dukhamapnuyat."*

Accordingly when Gandhi conceived of India's liberation he adopted a comprehensive view of India's uplift in the context of human welfare or the welfare of all or the regeneration of the entire Universe. Hence he said, "I am a humble servant of India and in trying to serve India, I serve humanity at large."⁹² The primary objective behind his patriotism is the spirit of service, to humanity at large. "For me patriotism is the same as humanity. I am patriotic because I am human and humane."⁹³ He subscribed to the concept of treating human race as a single family and just as members of a family sacrifice their self-interest for the good of the whole family, human welfare should be considered as of supreme significance by all patriotic persons of all nations. Freedom he considered as an opportunity to serve humanity and not as an instrument of exploitation of other nations. Accordingly he said : "I want the freedom of my country so that other countries may learn something from my country so that the resources of my country might be utilised for the benefit of mankind."⁹⁴

As a great humanist Gandhi believed that the ultimate

fulfilment and attainment of highest glory and greatness of a nation like that of an individual consists not in self-aggrandisement or personal gain at the expense of one's neighbour but self-sacrifice for the latter, and sublimation of self for the sake of the good of the rest of human society. Accordingly he said, "My love therefore of nationalism or my idea of nationalism is that my country may become free, that if need be the whole country may die so that the human race may live."⁹⁵

Thus Gandhi's patriotism and nationalism were aspects of his deep sense of humanism, sense of concern for the entire humanity, and passionate thirst for doing good to the entire universe. Promoting India's independence, as he viewed it, was intended not to inflict injury on other nations or to benefit at their expense but to benefit all in the true sense of the word. Accordingly he said in clear and categorical terms : "My mission is not merely brotherhood of Indian humanity. My mission is not merely freedom of India, though today it undoubtedly engrosses practically the whole of my life and the whole of my time. But through realisation of freedom of India I hope to realise and carry on the mission of the brotherhood of man. My patriotism is not an exclusive thing. It is all-embracing and I should reject that patriotism which sought to mount upon the distress or the exploitation of other nationalities. The conception of my patriotism is nothing if it is not always in every case without exception consistent with the broadest good of humanity at large. Not only that but my religion and my patriotism derived from my religion embrace all life. I want to realise brotherhood or identity not merely with the being called human, but I want to realise identity with all life even with such things as crawl upon earth."⁹⁶

Gandhi's patriotism and nationalism are therefore elements of his philosophy of life that comprehend the welfare of all living beings or universal well-being. Swaraj or independence was considered as a measure to promote such an end. Hence it has been observed : "The end which inspired Gandhiji was Sarvodaya the universal and uniform welfare of the entire humanity. It does no justice to Gandhiji, embodiment of anaskti yoga that he was, to imagine that he aspired for the welfare of Indians to the exclusion of rest of mankind. . . . India's independence was in his view a means towards the end of the Sarvodaya

of humanity.”⁹⁷

Gandhi's name is associated with opposition to industrialism, production through machinery, and production on a large scale in giant plants. Of course positively speaking, he primarily aimed at providing jobs to millions of hungry and starving, underfed and ill-nourished inhabitants of India and therefore advocated proliferation of small-scale, village or cottage industries which by their very nature are labour intensive. But behind his opposition to large-scale mechanised industries and his advocacy for small-scale and village industries, was a far nobler objective of welfare of all. Industrialism as he felt flourished on exploitation. Not only the workers or the proletariat within national boundaries are exploited; people beyond the national borders are also exploited. Hence he earnestly advocated, “Industrialism is, I am afraid, going to be a curse for mankind. Exploitation of one nation by another cannot go on for all time. Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, on foreign markets being open to you and on the absence of competitors.”⁹⁸ Gandhi believed that liberated India has a mission for the whole world, the mission of sacrificing one's self-interest for the sake of the welfare of the whole world or in other words for universal welfare. Since industrialisation to Gandhi is the synonym of exploitation, he cautioned Indians that a mad rush towards speedy industrialisation shall go against the Providential role of India or the fulfilment of its destiny, i.e. promotion of the welfare of all or the whole world. As Gandhi writes : “In fact, India when it begins to exploit other nations—as it must if it becomes industrialised—will be a curse for other nations, a menace to the world. And why should I think of industrialising India to exploit other nations ?”⁹⁹

Thus Gandhi's patriotism or nationalism, Swadesi or Swaraj had before them the ultimate objective of Sarvodaya or the welfare of the entire human race or universal welfare. As Jayaprakash Narayan has very appropriately observed, “It (Sarvodaya) is not a narrow national ideal but an order that includes the whole world, and the entire human race.”¹⁰⁰

(c) Integrated Development of All

In a country where the majority of the inhabitants live a

sub-human standard of living and many are on the verge of starvation, there is a natural propensity to conceive of welfare primarily in terms of economic welfare. Hence when the concept of Sarvodaya is interpreted as implying the welfare of all, the emphasis is normally laid on economic welfare or material prosperity of all. Gandhi, himself a representative of the Daridranarayan, and a symbol of their hopes and aspirations, had accepted ensuring basic minimum to each as the immediate objective of his concept of Sarvodaya or socialism. As he said, "Every one must have a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one's children and adequate medical relief."¹⁰¹ But he was not a materialistic maniac who found fulfilment of human life and realisation of the worth and purpose of man in the increased material prosperity of the individual and the community at large. Rather he said, "I do not want anything more for workers and peasants than enough to eat and house and clothe themselves and live in ordinary comforts as self-respecting human beings."¹⁰²

Gandhi never felt enamoured of material affluence nor did he ever realise that the individual's fulfilment and social perfection can be attained by mere material prosperity. On the other hand he was of the opinion that individual and social welfare lay in an integrated and synthetic view of welfare, a balanced development. Accordingly when Gandhi championed the cause of Sarvodaya, he not merely had before him the objective of welfare of all, but also all-round welfare of all the individuals in the society, that embraces ethical and spiritual development, as much as material development. Hence it has been observed : "Thus Sarvodaya refers not primarily to material objects, but to the total personality of the individual and to the cultural contents of a nation. It not only means the welfare of all, but the all welfare of each individual."¹⁰³

When Gandhi conceived of welfare of all in the sense of all-round or balanced development of all, he simply voiced the rationalistic and pragmatic thought and the core of the conscience of the modern world. One of the essential characteristics of Indian culture is its other worldliness—its lack of faith in materialism on the one hand and flair for spiritualism on the other. It is only natural to expect that Gandhi, profoundly influenced by such culture, grasped the fulfilment of human life

and personality not in the context of material prosperity alone. But what is very much significant, even in countries like U.S.A. and U.K. the most rationalist and pragmatic thinkers have become sceptical about real human development and fulfilment of human personality through material affluence alone; rather they apprehend that full blossoming of human personality becomes an impossibility in a society that suffers from materialistic overtone.

It is a universally acknowledged fact that the extent of economic prosperity of U.S.A with the per capita income, the level of consumption, and the standard of living of her people, is enormously high, and the entire world beyond U.S.A. cherishes the ambition of catching up with her level of prosperity. Not only the creature comforts but luxury has come to the home of the middle class who constitute the bulk of American population with a comparatively thin section of Marxian Proletariat on one extreme and fabulously rich multi-billionaires on the other. Household drudgeries of women at home has not only become an experience of the dead past : the advent of bottled, "canned", packed and frozen-food, gadgets of every kind, washing machine, drying machine, refrigerators, deep-freeze, television and automobiles which are now the possessions of all middle-class homes, is promoting their physical comfort and ministering to their sensuous pleasure. But the question has been raised, "Does it insure and nourish man's spiritual existence as completely as his physical existence ? Does it yield that deep satisfaction which the thinkers and prophets of all ages equate with fitness of life ?"¹⁰¹

It is doubtful if such material affluence, and increased economic welfare do really promote the maximum good, and all-round development of all individuals and the society at large. People in U.S.A. and in the rest of the West, in their mad rush for material comforts and with a desire to retain the consumption level and the standard of living that they have attained, sacrifice their real good and real welfare. In their passion for material welfare and comfort, they work harder, earning more income to pay for the assortment of new gadgets that has a continually expanding horizon, leaving less of leisure for creative and really comfortable living. In the rapidly expanding economy with fashions and designs changing too frequently,

people feel unhappy unless they cope with the latest models. Procurement through hire-purchase or credit, of houses, automobiles and gadgets and liabilities to insurance companies, perpetually mortgage the minds of the people and their happiness to the manufacturers or suppliers of these material comforts. Nearly half of the income of the people is spent before they are earned. Thus with such material prosperity and physical comforts are associated "doubts, fear, and indeed a complex of fears". As it has been observed: "There is the fear of loss of possessions through unemployment and failure to keep up with weekly and monthly payments for gadgets, a car and even a house."¹⁰⁵

Thus real happiness and welfare that is more an attitude of the mind and spirit is lost sight of in this craze for material welfare and physical comfort. Hence: "the expanding economy now in operation in the United States is doing incalculable damage to the spiritual condition of its people. Because the system of retail credit absorbs nearly all income as fast as it is earned, the people although they have a relatively high standard of material living are always short of cash and conscious of being heavily in debt. These two drag down the mind to mundane things and force upon it a materialistic outlook and concern."¹⁰⁶

Not only real happiness of the individuals or their welfare recedes; it becomes a mirage and a dream impossible of attainment. Material considerations having overtaken the mind stunts its spiritual growth and the balanced development of man. As Jawaharlal Nehru observed in his convocation address at Santiniketan: "Although the western people had received all the blessings of mammon worship they were not mentally happy. Materially they had progressed but had lost all the happiness of fearless soul. Material progress seemed to have killed the essence of their soul."¹⁰⁷

Thus people in the affluent society lack spiritual content and suffer from spiritual deficiencies. Their personalities have become fragmented and decimated. While living a life of affluence, their quality of life suffers, and so also their quality of mind and intellect. It has been observed by Wilfred Wellock that such a declining spiritual and moral stature of the individual may have its impoverishing effect on the spirit of the

nation and there may be the risk of, "disintegration of the national moral fibre by a way of life which throws its population into a devouring and soul destroying materialism".¹⁰⁸

Apart from the material affluence that opens the gateway to moral and spiritual decline, the mechanistic civilisation that paves the way and prepares the ground for an economy of affluence, is itself a threat to the blossoming of human personality. Machinery were invented to minimise human drudgeries, facilitate production of larger quantity of goods within a shorter time and at a lower cost thereby multiplying the prospect of enjoyment of more leisure in a better way. But with the gradual perfection of mechanical civilisation and advent of the age of automation, man has been converted to a machine, meant to take care of the machine and has thus become an appendage of the machine. Men by tending the power-driven machines in giant industrial establishments have exchanged a life that had meaning and significance for them and embraced numerous creative acts and social values, for one that lacks all these values. Their work has become increasingly repetitive and impersonal and it has lost its functional and vocational character. Thus work in this age of automation has ceased to be interesting and satisfying to the creative zeal of the worker and has degenerated into an irksome necessity for earning one's bread or for maintaining a high standard of living. Hence it is no wonder that "the workers lost social status, responsibility, creative opportunity, the vital relationships of an organic community and all sense of vocation." ¹⁰⁹

Individuals in such predominantly materialistic societies have a fickle, futile, point-less and meaningless existence devoid of any higher purpose. Thus there has been colossal loss of human creativity, that can be applied for the improvement of the world we live in. There has been a considerable dehumanisation and depersonalisation and by stages the integrated man of the pre-industrial age has been "transformed into a rudderless robot". In place of the whole-men or creative men who were centres of initiative, energy, and life, the civilisation based on automation has produced soul-less men, spiritually rest-less but emotionally and materialistically developed. As Rene Fulop Miller has observed, the system has produced on the one hand "economic men" and on the other "mass man" that drags

down the status of man the "crown of creation".¹¹⁰ Wilfred Wellock has similarly observed : "The combined effect of industrial specialisation and its off-spring materialism has been seriously to fragment the human person. And since man's finer powers are rejected by those who determine his labour, he quickly loses his wholeness and becomes a decapacitated person . . . They have not bloomed. Instead we have the mass man and the mass mind, more money but a lower spiritual vitality, the welfare state but sick souls and vacant minds."¹¹¹

Under such a materialistic civilisation of the west, devoid of spiritual content and ethical value, with human beings dehumanised and robotised, spiritually bankrupt and intellectually despoiled, with devaluation of all classic and time-tested values, all moral aberrations are considered as signs of chivalry and adventurism. "Too many quiet, familiar values which contain, the salt of life are being swept away."¹¹² The spate of divorce, drunkenness, suicides and accidents is but a natural manifestation of purpose-less and point-less existence of the products of such grossly materialistic civilisation. Hence it has been said : "Need we wonder that pilfering and unreliability among the workers, and conscienceless charging for goods and services and other anti-social business practices are rampant, that moral delinquency is wide spread, that sex has got out of perspective, that the craving for goods and services and thus for more income, and hire purchase buying, are becoming something of a mania and that restlessness and discontent are spreading like a disease."¹¹³

Such a life devoid of higher values and subtler objectives, predominantly mundane and deeply entrenched in naked materialism and self-seeking idealism, is considered uninspiring even by those who indulge in it. People tired of such futile and pointless existence are anxious to escape from such soul-devouring materialism. As Wilfred Wellock has very sarcastically observed : "In a great majority of cases the object of possessing a motor-car was to escape from an existence, that has become intolerable. One rushed home from work on Saturday noon, jumped into the car with the family and a carefully prepared paraphernalia and toreaway to some elusive Arcadia like maniacs escapade from an asylum. The motor-car has its right and proper uses; but its main function apart from business

has been to provide a quick escape from an existence that had become increasingly nauseating . . . The mass production of aeroplanes points the way to an even more exciting means of escape from the horrors of a mechanistic existence.”¹¹⁴

What is true of man in the affluent economy of U.S.A. or other capitalist countries of the west is also true of his counterpart under communist regimes. The communist system of economy and social structure stems from and is sustained by the Marxian concept of materialistic interpretation of history. Thus stark materialism remains at the root of this philosophy and economic system although the ultimate objective is eradication of the misery of millions. Marx and his ardent followers like Lenin and Stalin were primarily concerned with material prosperity of the proletariat. In order to guarantee better life to the proletariat, to release it from the shackles of unemployment, uncertainty and exploitation, Marx devised a scheme of concentration of ownership and management of the economy in the hands of the state. Such centralisation of means of production and distribution, he felt, shall pave the way for “free development of each” which shall in turn lead to the “free development of all”; but the practices in the communist countries have demonstrated beyond doubt that although the proletariat has gained in respect of economic status, and material prosperity, man has not gained in moral or spiritual stature.

Concentration of ownership in the hands of the state combined with central planning, progressive technology and age of automation, has elevated to a position of predominance a “New Class”—the political bureaucracy, the privileged class of party bosses, and technocrats. People in the communist countries are so much controlled mentally, intellectually and spiritually, that a state of economic serfdom under the capitalist system has been replaced by a new type of serfdom no less oppressive and overwhelming than the former. Like the automations of the U.S. economic system it has dehumanised man and created a class of “mass-man”. As Rene Fulop Miller has very appropriately observed : “The Bolsheviks took over most of the outfit and their original offer read no less appealingly. They promised to help the underdog, they promised a just distribution of goods and the protection of labour. Many people rushed in their orders, and from Russia they received

their collective security and a common purpose of the working class. But they also received an unordered item, mass-man or collective man. The mass-man was produced by the State and came equipped with a synthetic outlook on life. He was conditioned to accept freedom from thought, freedom from choice, and freedom from personal decision and in return he received the emotional security of a robot."¹¹⁵

As Albert Schweitzer has observed, 'Civilisation presupposes free men . . .'¹¹⁶ But freemen are conspicuous by their absence in the communist system. The mind, intellect and spirit of the people under the communist system are tied down too firmly to the philosophy and dogmas of the system to have freeplay and unrestrained development. There is in operation a monstrous method of oppression and destruction of the human mind that compels the individuals to conform to the established ideology. Any deviation from the orthodox Marxian ideology is threatened with persecution, liquidation and annihilation. As Milovan Djilas has observed : "Persecution of democratic and socialist thought which is at variance with that of the ruling oligarchy is fiercer and more complete than persecution of the most reactionary followers of the former regime."¹¹⁷

Marxian ideology as interpreted by the master minds like Lenin and Stalin is so firmly entrenched and treated so sacrosanct that any new line of thought is considered a heresy. Philosophers and scientists are forbidden to think freely and express openly. The tyranny over the mind and intellectual activities is so complete that the intellectuals live and act under the perpetual terror that their thought and philosophy may offend the socialist morale established by the master minds like Marx, Lenin and Stalin. Conformism has become such a supreme virtue and deviationism such an obnoxious crime that minds do not blossom under such a system. As Milovan Djilas has posed the problem : "What can the unfortunate physicist do, if atoms do not behave according to the Hegelian-Marxist struggle, or according to the uniformity of opposites and their development in higher forms ? What of the astronomers if the cosmos is apathetic to communist dialectics ? What of the biologists, if plants do not behave according to the Lysenko-Stalinist theory on harmony and co-operation of classes in a socialist society ? Because it is not possible for

these scientists to lie naturally, they must suffer the consequences of this 'heresies'. To have their discoveries accepted they must make discoveries confirming the formula of Marxism-Leninism. Scientists are in a constant dilemma as to whether their ideas and discoveries will injure official dogma. They are therefore forced into opportunism and compromise with regard to science. The same is true of other intellectuals."¹¹⁸

The Communist system not only does not provide facilities to individuals for their intellectual or spiritual growth; they are simply made to commit to memory and conditioned by "hackneyed Marxist formulas". Thus the intellectual and spiritual development of the individuals is retarded, stunted and frozen. The development of their innate potentialities is thus stifled and the emasculation of human intellect leads to the evolution of distorted, fragmented and fractionalised human personalities.

Thus whether it is under affluent capitalist economy of the West or the Communist system of the East, the emphasis is misplaced. Instead of attempting to develop the full-man, the whole-man or an integrated personality, both under ebullient capitalism and resurgent communism, the emphasis is on material prosperity. Man is submerged in the surging tide of soul-devouring materialism. As Richard B. Gregg has very appropriately observed : "Both capitalism and communism, assume that the production and consumption of material things, is the most important aim of life and civilisation."¹¹⁹ Milovan Djilas goes a step ahead when he says : "The concepts, communism, capitalism, even socialism in so far as it does not mean freer personalities, greater rights for social groups . . . all belong to earlier ages."¹²⁰

Albert Schweitzer pines over the decline in the quality and character of the modern man and lack of comprehensiveness of his life. In the mad rush for material prosperity he felt man's reflectiveness, his skill and "his creative and artistic powers are atrophied". Such devaluation of the personality of man that has lost its richness and variety under the impact of materialistic cultural upsurge, according to him, poses a grave threat to the future of civilisation. As he has observed : "The man of today, pursues his dark journey in a time of darkness as one who has no freedom, no mental collectedness, no all-round development, as one who loses himself in an atmosphere of

inhumanity, who surrenders his spiritual independence and his moral judgment to the organised society in which he lives, and who finds himself in every direction up against hindrance to the temper of true civilisation.”¹²¹ He further adds that “with the progress of history and the economic development of the world, it is becoming not easier but harder to develop true civilisation”.¹²²

Hence the real problem whose solution may indicate the ways for a true and creative civilisation of the future is resurrection of man, his emancipation from the degeneration that he has suffered, and development of the whole-man. Due regard must be paid apart from the material prosperity of man—his freedom from want, uncertainty, and exploitation—to the development of the whole-man or a balanced development of his mind, soul, as well as the body. As it has been very appropriately suggested by Wilfred Wellock : “A satisfying and enduring civilisation must be founded on whole persons. Hence the rights and freedoms which enable men to become whole are more important than the rights and freedoms to become rich.”¹²³ In a different context Wilfred Wellock has also suggested : “The policy we need must take account of the wholeman, his spiritual as well as his material being. Material need should be related to the well-being of the wholeman whence mind and spirit would control and limit material demands.”¹²⁴

Thus to promote the real welfare of man and to engineer his true emancipation, there must be a balanced development of his personality. The quantitative civilisation that merely fragments and decimates human persons must be supplanted by a qualitative civilisation that makes a whole person—that makes him materially rich and intellectually and spiritually still more vigorous and prosperous.

Apart from emphasising on the need for adding a moral, spiritual and ethical dimension to the life of modern men so as to make the development of an integrated personality possible and human civilisation creative and virile, the rationalist thinkers of the age also harp on cultivation by the individuals of a societarian frame of mind, outlook, and approach. As D. P. Hoffman has put it “The purpose of life is to build a Greater Soul—to become more like God. . . . To spend one’s time primarily thinking and desiring material things results in

actual slavery.”¹²⁵ The real worth and value of life is in giving on to others, the brilliance that it contains or as Jesus Christ in his Sermon on the Mount said : “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good work.” Albert Einstein has written : “The true value of human being is determined by the measure and sense in which he has attained to liberation from the self.”¹²⁶ The great historian of science, George Sarton has also given expression to the same philosophy when he writes : “We can only find ourselves by losing ourselves. This is in my opinion the deepest saying of the gospels. Utter renouncement is the shortest and surest road to the establishment of one’s personality or more exactly to the accomplishment of what one was born to do.”¹²⁷

True life and the real worth of the individual blossoms forth and his real development, welfare and emancipation emerge out of a life lived primarily for others and through merging one’s identity in the good of the society. As Richard B. Gregg has very aptly and artfully put it, “The caterpillar ceases to exist as a caterpillar, but it lives on as a butterfly.”¹²⁸

The true meaning of life and the true worth of a virile civilisation therefore consist of what Albert Schweitzer has said, a “Spirit of true humanitarianism,” or living and getting prepared to die for the community or humanity as such. As Daniel P. Hoffman has put it : “Love and non-violence are the most important instruments in mankind’s true progress in our world. This is the only Godly way, to make progress. This means non-possessiveness of property real and personal. The greatest good should be our primary concern.”¹²⁹

Gandhi, in conformity with the latest variety of rationalistic thought in respect of full blossoming of human personality and future of human civilisation, while advocating Sarvodaya or the welfare of all, did not mean thereby merely material welfare of the rich and the poor, the able bodied and the physically disabled, intelligent and mentally deficient, but an all-round, integrated and balanced development of all, or the integrated welfare of all individuals. Real good or supreme welfare or real emancipation of all, he felt, does not lie in mere material affluence of each individual. As a pragmatist, he did never overlook the fact that grinding pauperism shall not lead to anything else than moral degradation.¹³⁰ But all the same

he was convinced that material affluence alone is inadequate to promote real good or ensure real progress of the individual; rather he believed that "possession of riches has been a hindrance to real growth."¹³¹ As Jesus was firmly of opinion, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God." Gandhi firmly adhered to the view that real progress of man and his all-round development recedes in inverse proportion to his material prosperity. He treated the materialistic civilisation or the economy of affluence with contempt as in his view the craze for material prosperity was taking the individual and the society down hill on the path of progress. Accordingly he said: "I hold that economic progress in the sense I have put it is antagonistic to real progress."¹³²

Gandhi was opposed to an industrialised and mecharistic economic system as he apprehended that such a system is a great handicap for the real blossoming of the human personality. Apart from unemployment that it may create in a populous country like India, too much of reliance on machine and automation will also exert dehumanising and debilitating effect on the growth of human personality. For him "The supreme consideration is man".¹³³ By tending the machine, the man in course of time becomes identified with the machine and becomes an appendage of the same. His creativity is lost. His craft and skill and his mental and spiritual development are thereby stunted. Hence he said, "The machine should not tend to make atrophied the limbs of man."¹³⁴

Gandhi did not use the term "limbs" literally but metaphorically. This meant the entire personality of man including his physical, intellectual, moral, and religious potentialities. Man's development lies in a comprehensive and integrated development of all his faculties. Accordingly Gandhi writes: "As I look at Russia where the apotheosis of industrialisation has been reached, the life there does not appeal to me. To use the language of the Bible what shall it avail a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? In modern terms, it is beneath human dignity to lose one's individuality and become a mere cog in the machine. I want every individual to become a full blooded, fully developed member of society."¹³⁵

Thus Gandhi's emphasis is on full and balanced develop-

ment of the individual which implies not only his material prosperity but also his moral and spiritual uplift and his wholesale refinement. Hence as Dada Dharmadhikari explains the Gandhian term of Sarvodaya : "In the days of old the term *abhudaya* was being used to connote only material prosperity. Therefore Gandhi has used the term 'Udaya' instead of 'Abhudaya'. The objective of Sarvodaya is simultaneous and balanced development of all the faculties of man"¹³⁶.....

While Gandhi's concept of Sarvodaya pins its faith on an integrated development of the individual personality, its primary emphasis is on moral and spiritual aspect of the development of man. Gandhi was very much critical of the materialistic civilisation of the west because he felt that the emphasis was misplaced and misdirected. In his caricature of the civilisation of the west he pointed out that civilisation does not mean donning better dresses, living in better built houses, having access to speedy means of locomotion, reliance on automation and devising and perfecting methods of prosecuting war. "This civilisation" as he said "takes note neither of morality nor of religion".¹³⁷ As he further said, "This civilisation is irreligious and it has taken such a hold on the people in Europe that those who are in it appear to be half mad."¹³⁸

Thus whereas Gandhi's concept of Sarvodaya lays stress on the comprehensive welfare of all individuals or their all-round and balanced development, and overtone of ethics or morality is clearly in evidence. It appears that Gandhi would perhaps say with Albert Schweitzer : "Ethical progress is then, that, truly of the essence of civilisation, and has only one significance; material progress is that which is much less essential and may have a good or bad effect on the development of civilisation."¹³⁹

But what is more significant, Gandhi while conceiving of Sarvodaya in the sense of the balanced, integrated and all-round development of all individuals did not overlook the fact that such an integrated and balanced development is inconceivable without the full blossoming of their societal conscience or without the opening of a fully matured sociitarian dimension to their individual personality. As a matter of fact his emphasis on the full blossoming of the societal conscience of the individual follows as a direct corollary of his emphasis on the moral,

spiritual and ethical development of man. As he said, "Civilisation is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms."¹⁴⁰

Of course it is true that the individual is considered as the centre of the social philosophy of Gandhi and his concept of Sarvodaya. Of course he said, "The individual is the one supreme consideration." But the individual, that is the "supreme consideration" of Gandhi, whose all-round and balanced development was his life-long concern and forms the centre of his concept of Sarvodaya, is, not an atomistic, self-centred, egoistic and narrowly individualistic personality, devoid of a sense of social susceptibility and conscious of his exclusiveness and his egoistic self, independent of the society. Under the impact of the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishad, Gandhi had an organic view of the society and the individual. Like the Greenivian individual the Gandhian man is a moral and spiritual personality who, while conscious of his own-self, is equally conscious of other selves and their inter-dependence in the social framework. The balanced development of all individuals does not therefore involve their development as independent entities who work at cross purposes, the development of one necessarily taking place at the expense of the other; rather it involves simultaneous development of all individuals as different organs of same body—body social—which constitutes the real index of a truly healthy and developed body.

Besides under the influence of Ruskin contained in his *Unto This Last*, Gandhi grasped the significance of the concept of social affection. As *Unto This Last* says: "The universal law of the matter is that, assuming any given quantity of energy and sense in master and servant, the greatest material result obtainable by them will be not through antagonism to each other, but through affection to each other."¹⁴¹ The message of *Unto This Last* apart from its emphasis on the principle of social affection, is the principle of sacrifice. Speaking about the duty of the Pastors, Physicians, lawyers and the merchants, Ruskin says: "the duty of all these men is, on due occasion, to die for it. For truly the man who does not know when to die does not know how to live."¹⁴²

Hence when under the direct and immediate influence of

Unto This Last, Gandhi coined the term Sarvodaya, he did not miss the point that the welfare of all and the balanced development of each can not be conceived without, full development of their societal conscience, complete consciousness of the welfare of all and promotion by them of societarian development and welfare. Therefore Gandhi whose life's mission was to wipe tears from every eye, who was anxious to promote every body's happiness and aspired for his integrated development and welfare, believed in the light of the Ishopanishadic injunction of "Tena Twaktena Bhunjitha" that the real happiness and welfare of the individuals consist not in the maximisation of sensual happiness and accumulation of wealth and property but in the renunciation of one's possession for the sake of the good of the community. Rather he felt that the real welfare of the individual and maximisation of human happiness depend on humane approach and follow as natural corollaries of renunciation. As Gandhi said : "Therefore take it as you like, either in the sense that the enjoyment or use is the reward of renunciation, or that the renunciation is the condition of enjoyment, renunciation is essential for our very existence, for our soul."¹⁴³

Hence real all-round emancipation stems according to Gandhi from renunciation for the welfare of the society. He characterised renunciation as a "new birth" or "regeneration". As he further said : "The human body is meant solely for service, never for indulgence. The secret of happy life lies in renunciation. Renunciation is life Indulgence spells death."¹⁴⁴

That apart, Gandhi while under the influence of the Bhagavad Gita subscribed to the view that yajna stands at the root of this creation, sustains and upholds it, and human beings can blossom and flourish only through performance of yajna, under the influence of the societarian motivation said, "Yajna means an act directed to the welfare of others, done without desiring any return for it, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature."¹⁴⁵ Hence blossoming of human personality according to him is dependent on rendering service to others, or one's integrated development of all-round welfare consists in promoting the welfare of all.

Thus the individual, whose welfare Gandhi championed as the core of his concept of Sarvodaya, cannot obtain a balanced integrated and all-round fulfilment of his personality without

living a life beyond self, sanctified by a spirit of self-denial for the sake of social welfare. •

Hence the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya or balanced and integrated development of all individuals apart from involving their material, moral, spiritual and ethical development also involves the development of societarian outlook and societal conscience of these individuals. For the sake of enjoying maximum welfare, they need not be merely materially, spiritually, and ethically developed individuals; they should be individuals deeply inspired by a sense of social affection, a spirit of sacrifice for the sake of the community, and a readiness to live and die for the community. As Dada Dharmadhikari has observed, the principles of "live by preying on others" and "live and let live" have become out of date. The only sublime principle and ideology that still holds the ground and has its validity is "life for the sake of others" and that constitutes the core of Sarvodaya ideology.¹⁴⁶ Hence explaining the spirit that shall animate the attitude and approaches of the individual in a Sarvodaya social order of Gandhian conception Jayaprakash Narayan has observed : "In Sarvodaya however one has to be solicitous of others' interests. Man's nature will have to be changed, values of life will have to be revolved."¹⁴⁷ As he has further observed : "Therefore it is imperative for all to work for the good of the whole society which is the chief idea enshrined in Sarvodaya."¹⁴⁸

Vinoba Bhave is of opinion that Sarvodaya implies extension of the principles of family life, its mutual love and compassion and common sharing of weal and woe to the broader arena of society.¹⁴⁹ Narayan Desai has given vent to the same feeling when he says that under Sarvodaya "the philosophy of good-neighbourliness shall gradually broaden into universal brotherhood."¹⁵⁰ Thus the Sarvodaya social order of Gandhian conception aspires for the promotion, apart from other virtues, of the sublime societal values of love, self-sacrifice, mutual help, equality, fraternity, and fellowship.

Gandhi in presenting the picture of his ideal society reconstructed on Sarvodaya lines has said : "In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle,

whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance, but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle, of which they are integral units.”¹⁵¹

Thus Sarvodaya or the welfare of all as conceived by Gandhi not only comprehends balanced, all-round and integrated development of all individuals that encompasses as much moral, spiritual and ethical development as material development; it lays equal emphasis on the full development of the sociitarian dimension of individual's personality in order to make the development really balanced, comprehensive and integrated.

To sum up Sarvodaya as the ultimate objective of Gandhian socialism is a philosophy of all-welfare of all individuals or a balanced and integrated development of all that has a moralistic overtone. Hence as it has been observed, “The fundamental notion in the Sarvodaya philosophy is the primacy and ultimateness of the spirit.”¹⁵²

SARVODAYA, SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

Gandhi styled himself as a socialist and even went a step ahead to call himself a communist; yet for him socialism and communism are transcendental forms of egalitarian social philosophy that find their fulfilment and culmination in sarvodaya.

Socialism—whether Utopian or Scientific—and communism, are primarily idealistic, ethical and humanitarian doctrines. They are concerned with eradication of application, elimination of the misery of the millions, elevation of the status of the poor, unfortunate and the down-trodden, and founding a society based on the principles of economic equality and social justice. They are philosophies that champion the cause of the exploited, the oppressed and the under-privileged. They aim at a saner and scientific reordering of society.

Sarvodaya is equally the vision of a just society free from exploitation, inequality and human miseries. As Rajendra Prasad posed the issue, Sarvodaya represents an aspiration “towards a society based on Truth and Non-violence, in which

there will be no distinction of caste or creed, no opportunity for exploitation, and full scope for development both for individuals as well as groups.”¹⁵³ Jayaprakash Narayan speaking about Sarvodaya has also said : “What we desire is the establishment of a society in which there will be no exploitation, there will be perfect equality and each individual will have equal opportunities for development.”¹⁵⁴ Thus Sarvodaya aims at a “classless, casteless and non-exploitative society”.¹⁵⁵

Speaking about the basic inspirations of Sarvodaya and communism, Vinoba Bhave has said : “Whatever differences there might be between Gandhism and communism, there are also points of similarity between these and these too are important The cause of the have-nots is the basic sentiment running through both. Both Gandhism and communism, regard the well-being of the poor and the oppressed with the intensely loving regard of the mother.”¹⁵⁶ K. G. Mashruwala also expressed identical sentiment when he wrote, “The common point between Gandhi and Marx is the extreme concern of both for the suppressed and the oppressed, the resourceless and the ignorant, the dumb and the starving section of humanity.”¹⁵⁷

Thus, socialism, communism and Sarvodaya are radical, non-egocentric and egalitarian doctrines that militate against the philosophy of laissez-fairism in the economic and social domain. All these ideologies are idealistic and ethical in inspiration and humanitarian in outlook. Marx and Engels the co-fathers of Scientific Socialism or Communism, in their passion for devising a method for the eradication of the misery of millions aspired for an “association, in which the free-development of each is the condition for the free-development of all”.¹⁵⁸ Gandhi with his concern for the starving millions pitched his ambition in Sarvodaya or the welfare of all. Idealistically considered, there is so much of identity between the objectives of socialism, communism and Sarvodaya that Jayaprakash Narayan was prompted to say, “If we are true socialists we would be true followers of Sarvodaya as well ”¹⁵⁹

But to say that socialism or communism as practised in the modern world are concepts identical to Sarvodaya is to do violence to the latter. Sarvodaya is a far more comprehensive and all-embracing concept than socialism or communism although apparently they have identical inspiration and objective.

Although socialism and communism have a moral and ethical objective—one of elimination of the acquisitive, exploitative, unjust and inegalitarian socio-economic system—yet like their sworn enemy in the realm of ideology i.e., capitalism, they err on the side of being ideologies that champion the cause and aspire to protect and promote the interest of a single class in the society i.e., of the proletariat, instead of the entire society or the community. They emanated as philosophies of the proletariat—a product of the Industrial Revolution, monopoly capitalism and bourgeois revolution,—and continue to remain the hope of the proletariat, providing philosophies for their action. The future is not only conceived in the context of the proletariat; the dictatorial regime of the transitional period as conceived by the Scientific Socialists or the Communists is justified on the ground of the interests of the proletariat, derives its power and strength from the proletariat, and is christened as the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

Strictly speaking socialism or communism, as social philosophies, do not comprehend the welfare of the society as such, consisting of different sections of people, and different interests, but of a single class, the proletariat. Like the democratic philosophy, socialism and communism justify their superiority over capitalism on the basis that they aspire to cater to the needs of the majority of the society i.e. the Proletariat. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat as conceived by the Scientific Socialists or the Communists is justified on the ground that it is a type of dictatorship of the majority over the minority. Thus socialism and communism are basically class philosophies and at their best majoritarian philosophies. They no doubt aspire to promote the welfare of the poor and the down-trodden and the oppressed and the economically and socially depressed; yet as ideals they sacrifice the minority on the altar of the majoritarian economic democracy.

But Sarvodaya as an ideology far transcends the socialist and communist objectives. Strictly speaking it is a social philosophy instead of being a class-philosophy since it comprehends the welfare of all and all sections of the society. Socialism and communism in their attempt to undo the evils of capitalism and in their effort to create a new society that shall be class-less, have remained sectarian philosophies or philosophy

of a class. But Sarvodaya as an ideal, truly aspires to transcend class division and sectarianism and becomes the philosophy of the entire society, all classes included. Emancipation and upliftment of all are within its purview. As Vinoba Bhave has very rightly observed, Sarvodaya is a : "supreme revolutionary concept . . . we do not aspire the emancipation of the greater or the greatest number of people. The only solution lies in the emancipation of all. Big and small, weak and the energetic, foolish and the intelligent, all are to be emancipated".¹⁶⁰

All in the society, whether rich or poor, economically prosperous or otherwise, lame or the blind, deaf or the dumb, all require emancipation from the state of their economic, moral or spiritual degeneration under whose heels they suffer. Richer sections of the society very often lead a life of moral depravity and live in spiritual slums. They need emancipation as much as the poor who require economic regeneration from a state of economic servitude. All in the society need attention and the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya neglects none. It attends to the material needs of the poor and the spiritual needs of the rich, and emancipation of all becomes its objective. Unlike socialism or communism, Sarvodaya as a philosophy is not exclusive but is, all-inclusive and all-embracing. As R. R. Diwakar has observed : "It is entirely inclusive and not exclusive even of the worst and the most wicked that may be found in the society."¹⁶¹ It repudiates the concept of the greatest good of the greatest number or the philosophy of the interests of the numerical majority. It accepts society as an integrated whole, different individuals constituting essential limbs of the same on whose health, unity and strength, depend the viability of the body politic.

Although socialism and communism as social philosophies are primarily ethical and moral in inspiration, materialistic objective plays a predominant role in such philosophies. It can never be disputed that the socialist fathers like Marx and Engels in their obsession with an exploitative and inequalitarian society characterised by unparalleled prosperity on the one hand and abysmal poverty on the other advocated a society devoid of such disparity. Poverty amidst plenty and shortages amidst accumulation of surpluses were painful features that they wanted to get rid of. They advocated a sober and scientific reordering

of society that shall rise above such contradictions. They aspired for a social and economic order that shall be based on equality, fraternity, fellow-feeling and common sharing of the wealth of the community. But although their inspiration was primarily moral and ethical, the objective was purely material in the sense that they believed that by rearranging the economic structure of the society, by improving the lot of the economically underprivileged, by ensuring economic security to the starving millions, and by reducing or eliminating economic disparities, they would succeed in the ushering in of the new civilisation of socialism. Thus they wanted to reconstruct the society and refine and resurrect it by adopting a materialistic standard. Hence as Jayaprakash Narayan has very appropriately observed : "Socialism and communism, both lay great emphasis on material prosperity, on ever growing production, and on an ever-rising standard of living."¹⁶²

But at the same time Jayaprakash Narayan, who at the early stage of life was an impassioned Marxist or Scientific Socialist, has expressed the apprehension, that due to this too much of emphasis on materialistic values, "Equality, freedom, brotherhood", the values so much cherished by the socialists "would all be in danger of being submerged in a universal flood of materialism".¹⁶³ Besides, since the socialists and the communists adopt a materialistic approach for attaining a moral objectives as high as an egalitarian society based on equality, fraternity and fellow feeling, it is but natural that their hopes founder on the rock of Party-centred and bureaucratised state machine. All types of tyranny are tolerated for the sake of dubious material prosperity and socialism and communism in the sense of equality, fraternity and fellowship, vanish in the thin air.

But Sarvodaya as a philosophy not merely connotes the welfare of all; it equally implies all-round development of all the individuals. Sarvodaya recognises that apart from the material welfare of the individual, his moral, spiritual, ethical and sociitarian developments are of equal or even of greater importance. It is based on the faith that the real development of the individual becomes a mirage and his real welfare recedes unless his material welfare is reinforced by spiritual and ethical upliftment. As Jayaprakash Narayan is of opinion : "I feel . . . that the task of social reconstruction can not succeed under the

inspiration of a materialist philosophy.”¹⁶⁴ As he has further observed : “Social reconstruction is impossible without human reconstruction.”¹⁶⁵ Accordingly the Sarvodaya philosophy of Gandhi emphasises on human character, its non-acquisitiveness and selflessness, its sociability and capacity to renounce one’s privileges for the greater good of the community at large. The emphasis is not on material self-aggrandisement but on spiritual and ethical values, and the blossoming of true humanity. Hence the burden of emphasis of the Gandhian philosophy of Sarvodaya is on “love, care, sharing, sacrifice, feeling for the common good, non-possessiveness, self-discipline and so on”.¹⁶⁶

As Chakravarti Rajgopalachari was of opinion, Sarvodaya as an objective provides the individual guide lines to pursue and perform Dharma or Swadharma.¹⁶⁷ Since performance of Swadharma does not consist in the acquisition of wealth or material object but performance of one’s duty to the society, this Sarvodaya ideal is ethical and moral in conception. Hence Rajgopalachari has further opined “Sarvodaya includes all that is good. Gandhiji was ambitious to see that every one becomes good and for that he placed this ideal of Sarvodaya.”¹⁶⁸

Thus good of the individual in a comprehensive and all-embracing sense of all-round development or wholesale emancipation of man—materially, spiritually ethically and morally—forms the true objective of Sarvodaya. Hence it is quite natural to agree with R. R. Diwakar that Sarvodaya “extends to all planes of existence, namely, physical, vital, mental, and spiritual”.¹⁶⁹ In this respect Sarvodaya is not only different from but also superior to the commonly accepted scientific socialist and communist ideologies that are mainly concerned with mundane matters.

Sarvodaya as a technique for the emancipation of man and his socio-economic transformation so that a society based on equality, fraternity and fellowship is ushered in, is more scientific, practical and pragmatic than the Scientific Socialist or Communist technique. Scientific Socialism or Communism of Marx and Engels, and Lenin and Stalin advocates violent technique for a change-over in favour of an egalitarian society, a society free from exploitation and privilege. Force is not only considered necessary for the emancipation of man and transformation of the society; it is considered essential and

inevitable. Methods of violence and bloodshed, and forcible overthrow and liquidation of the bourgeoisie are considered the midwives or the fostering mothers of social revolution leading to the emergence of an egalitarian society. The society must undergo the birth-pangs of temporary chaos, confusion, dislocation and loss of human values, so that a saner and sober, just and egalitarian society becomes a reality in future. If Marx and Engels in their Communist Manifesto expressed their conviction that "violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat", Lenin and Stalin jealously pursued the technique of violence and particularly Stalin carried it forward to its logical conclusion so as to institutionalise violence, in form of violence of the Party machine, the bureaucracy and above all the state.

But what about realisation of the vision, the ushering in of a non-exploitative and egalitarian society whose bedrock is equality, fraternity and fellowship? Adoption of violent technique in Russia led to counter-violence that further accentuated the need for perfection of the technique of violence and its institutionalisation in the Dictatorship of the Proletariat that is as oppressive, as ruthless and as intolerant of opposition as any other dictatorship in history. While trying to level out class distinctions based on the principle of privileges, the communist countries have succeeded in creating a new class of party bosses, bureaucrats and technocrats, not less privileged than the privileged class that it has dislodged from power. Hence Jayaprakash Narayan has observed: "In terms of economic and political power, privilege and status, present day communist society is definitely a class society."¹⁷⁰ A novel form of exploitation of man by man has cropped up and that is, exploitation by party bosses, bureaucrats and the state machine.

No doubt each individual is assured of a living; yet he ceases to be a man. He is made to conform to the ideology of the party and the state. He is made to think the way the new messiahs direct him to think. As Milovan Djilas has very appropriately observed: "It is profoundly sickening to be compelled to remain silent when there is need for expression. It is tyranny at its worst to compel men not to think as they do, to compel men to express thoughts that are not their own."¹⁷¹

To the tyranny over the mind of the individual exercised by the Party, the bureaucracy and the new establishment, is added the tyranny of the centralised pattern of economy. *Scientific Socialism or Communism reclines too heavily on nationalisation, central planning and centralised production. Under such a system the creativity of the individual and his originality do not find scope for their unfoldment. Man becomes an appendage of the new system based on a novel type of exploitation and privilege. The real blossoming of his personality does not take place. Hence as Jayaprakash Narayan has very appropriately observed : "Violence will not establish the rule of justice and equality in society. It will be the rule of a select coterie who will perpetuate their iron grip on the people. Violence ensures the victory of the party that is more skilled in its use."¹⁷² As he has observed in another connection : "If the aim is to establish a society which will be free from exploitation and if that is achieved through violent means the aim will still remain unrealised. Violence sets in motion new forms of exploitation. The society which is truly free from exploitation can be created only through non-violence."¹⁷³

Narayan Desai, son of Gandhi's illustrious secretary Mahadev Desai and eminent Sarvodaya leader is also of opinion that violence is not the appropriate technique for people's democracy. He feels that the revolution that it initiates does not contemplate either welfare of all or all-welfare. Violent revolution according to him can not initiate real revolution. "The general public continue to be slaves as a result of violent revolution. Earlier they were slaves of the rich. After the violent revolution they would continue to be slaves of the strong. Such a revolution does no good to the general public."¹⁷⁴

The Democratic Socialists while trying to mitigate the deficiencies from which the communist technique suffers, adopt a technique of social transformation that falls far short of attaining the objectives visualised by the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya. Resort to change by Parliamentary method or application of the technique of legislation is a technique, that is majoritarian in principle and neglects the views and opinions of the minority, however rational, scientific and reasonable they may be. Such majoritarian measures may not really cater to the objective of maximum welfare or good of the entire society.

It may at best serve the interest of the majority.

Besides, the technique of legislation for social transformation in favour of an egalitarian society may initiate structural and organisational change in the economy, but it can not succeed in transforming the nature and character of the individual—the moral, ethical and spiritual facets of his personality—that are essential for the balanced, and all-round development of the individual. Mere nationalisation of the entire economy may at best put the economy at the disposal of the state that can be garnered for providing economic security to the citizens. But what about the moral, ethical and spiritual development that are more important than material development which can even be secured in a capitalist society or a welfare state like U.S.A. or U.K. ? No legislation can succeed in making men morally, ethically and spiritually richer than before. No force of law can make men really altruistic, self-sacrificing, socially conscious and inspired by a sense of social responsibility. Economic equality may be enforced by legislation, but fraternity and fellowship which are still more important can not be guaranteed by it. As it has been observed : “Law can prevent undesirable action but it can not provide inspiration for actions that are desirable. . . . Law separates individuals instead of bringing them closer. It foment quarrels among contending parties instead of generating love and fellow feeling.”¹⁷⁵ Hence the technique of legislation adopted by the democratic socialists may not succeed in effecting a balanced and all-round development of the individual.

The Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya steers clear of the democratic technique of reform through legislative or legal coercion on the one hand and violence and physical coercion exercised by the communists on the other. In place of coercion, physical or legal, it relies on the technique of conversion for effecting social transformation in the direction of a non-exploitative and egalitarian society, that shall ensure balanced and all-round welfare of all. Since Gandhi's primary concern was the welfare of all—a non-exploitative and a non-violent society where perfect equality, fraternity and fellowship shall prevail, and spiritual, ethical, moral and intellectual development of all shall be effected—he realised the inadequacy of the technique of violence; rather Gandhi who believed in the

indissoluble relationship between the end and means—that the means should be as pure as the end—rejected outright the notion that Sarvodaya or the welfare of all can ever be attained by physical, intellectual and moral coercion perpetrated by a section of the people against the rest of the community.

Gandhi therefore believed that Sarvodaya or the all-round emancipation of all can be realised only by the application of a morally and ethically viable method. All-round welfare or emancipation of each and all, require their material, moral and spiritual emancipation. For the material emancipation of the underprivileged, the hungry and the starving, the neglected and the lost, the existing inequality in the society has to be eliminated, but that can by no means be made by the violent overthrow of the men of wealth and property. Since Gandhi had faith in the basic goodness of men and he never doubted their reformability however depraved they may be, he believed that through the application of the technique of persuasion and appeal to the innate good sense of rich and the privileged, they may be made to renounce their privileges and apply their superfluous wealth for the welfare of the community. Such renunciation of wealth and privilege will not only be to the interest of the underprivileged, but of the privileged too. Such renunciation while facilitating material emancipation of the poor, shall also lead to the spiritual and ethical emancipation of the rich. Besides, the degeneration in moral, ethical and spiritual terms that would otherwise be suffered both by the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots, as a result of upsurge of violence and counter-violence shall be spared, and it would leave the society richer. Hence as J. C. Kumarappa has observed : “Sarvodaya necessarily has to be based on non-violence and Truth.”¹⁷⁶ It has also been observed : “The essence of the revolution contemplated by Sarvodaya is that it pins its faith on humane approach, at the root of which stands, the concept of revolution by human beings for the proliferation of human values and human virtues, and through a method that is strictly humane.”¹⁷⁷

Apart from its rejection of the technique of violence and its profound faith in the potency of persuasion, the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya also parts company with the socialists and the communists in respect of the role of the State. The

socialists and the communists repose their faith on the potency of the state to effect egalitarian transformation of the society. There is too much of reliance on the economic role of the state apart from its political role and the socialists and the communists not only advocate centralisation and concentration of economic powers in the hands of the state but also proliferation of the economic activities of the state. Hence as Jayaprakash Narayan has rightly observed : "Democratic socialists, communists, as well as welfarists. . . . are all statistes."¹⁷⁸

But such concentration of economic powers in the hands of the state and its combination with political power lead to too much of bureaucratisation, dehumanisation and loss of individual freedom, that make a mockery of the individuality of man, his freedom and dignity. Speaking about the nature of human dignity even under a democratic socialist state system; Jayaprakash Narayan has observed : "The democratic state remains a Leviathan that will sit heavily on the freedom of the people."¹⁷⁹ The position is still more intolerable under communist system. Although the state is considered as an instrument of class exploitation and domination and the scheme of things visualises its ultimate withering away in the long run, during the transitional period the state is not only tolerated but it gains so much in power, position and dignity through centralisation and concentration of economic powers in its hands that like the Frankenstein Monster, it devours the lofty ideals of classless society—liberty, equality, fraternity and fellowship. As Jayaprakash Narayan has observed : "The remedy is to create and develop forms of socialist living through the voluntary endeavour of the people rather than seek to establish socialism by the use of the power of the state. In other words, the remedy is to establish people's socialism, rather than state socialism."¹⁸⁰

But Sarvodaya as conceived by Gandhi, is the picture of a decentralised economic and political structure with economically self-sufficient and politically self-governing village republics constituting the warp and the woof of the whole social fabric. Such a system provides counter-weight to the centralised and bureaucratised state machinery that militate against real blossoming of the personality of man which is the very *sine qua non* of socialism. The individual, who remains at the centre

of the village republic and decentralised economic system gets full scope for the development of his personality as an integral part of the social system. Sarvodaya as conceived by Gandhi is a type of "people's socialism" or "voluntary socialism" as against "state enforced socialism" and thus the picture of a fuller and more real form of socialism. As Jayaprakash Narayan has observed : "Sarvodaya is people's socialism."¹⁸¹

Besides, Sarvodaya by its emphasis on decentralised economic system, minimum reliance on state machine, gradual disintegration of the central authority, and transfer of economic and political powers to smaller units, from the very beginning, paves the way for real withering away of the state. Instead of indulging in the romanticism that the state whose powers assume monstrous proportions shall wither away sometime in future, which has been demonstrated as next to impossible in the communist countries, the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya which is a more realistic doctrine, starts the pilgrimage towards the withering away of the state here and now, without waiting for a rosy but still an uncertain and doubtful future. The pilgrimage starts with the attempt to create a decentralised economic and political structure. As Vinoba Bhave has observed : "The authors of the Pooranas believed in the age of deliverance in the past. The Communists believe in the age of deliverance in the future. But Sarvodaya believes in the age of deliverance here and now."¹⁸²

Thus Sarvodaya as a concept of social engineering and instrument of social transformation is a lofty ideal far more all-inclusive and comprehensive than socialism or communism. Unlike socialism or communism it is not a sectarian creed and is concerned with the creation of a society of men and promotion of family spirit and sense of fraternity among the entire human race. Besides, whereas socialism and communism are primarily concerned with programmes of economic reconstruction, Sarvodaya is an all-embracing ideal with special emphasis on human values and moral and ethical considerations. Whereas neither Scientific Socialism nor Communism provide any true clue for the solution of the problem of violence in social relations, Sarvodaya from the very start aspires for a non-violent social order and the technique suggested is amply suitable for the fulfilment of the objective. Hence Sarvodaya considered

from all these angles, is a far nobler, subtler, loftier, broader, deeper and a transcendental concept than socialism or communism. As Vinoba Bhave has very appropriately observed : "Sarvodaya is a better word than 'socialist'; it is also our own native word, born from our own soil and carrying a noble meaning. We do not use the word because we are little doubtful if we can live up to it. So we prefer the word, socialist. But our goal is in fact Sarvodaya and our people are being prepared for absorption, into the sea of Sarvodaya."¹⁸³

Socialism and communism can realise their true meaning and significance and fulfil their sublime objective by merging their identity with Sarvodaya. As Jayaprakash Narayan has very appropriately observed : "Socialism as we understand it today, can not take mankind, to the sublime goals of freedom, equality, brotherhood and peace. Socialism no doubt gives promise to bring mankind closer to those goals than any other competing social philosophy. But I am persuaded that unless socialism is transformed into Sarvodaya, those goals would remain beyond its reach."¹⁸⁴ Acharya Vinoba Bhave has also expressed the same sentiment a little differently when he said, "There is no permanent conflict between the two ideologies—Marxism and Sarvodaya . . . As the Ganges becomes wider and wider and moves on and finally merges in the ocean, I hope Marxism will merge in the Sarvodaya one day."¹⁸⁵

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